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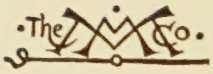
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MAKERS OF LITERATURE

BEING

ESSAYS ON SHELLEY, LANDOR, BROWNING
BYRON, ARNOLD, COLERIDGE, LOWELL
WHITTIER, AND OTHERS

BY

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY
AUTHOR OF "WILD EDEN," "HEART OF MAN," ETC.

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PREFACE

THE greater portion of the contents of this volume were published in 1890 as "Studies in Letters and Life," and originally appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Nation*, 1878–1890. The author's later papers have been added to this edition, and are from the *Century Magazine*, the *Atlantic*, the *Library of the World's Best Literature* (R. S. Peale and J. A. Hill, 1896, 1897), the edition of the "Essays of Elia" (Little, Brown & Co., 1892), and the author's selection from the poems of Aubrey de Vere (Macmillan, 1894). The volume thus comprises all of the author's critical work which it seems desirable to reprint.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE,
January 1, 1900.

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MATTHEW ARNOLD.

That considerable portion of Arnold's writings which was concerned with education and politics, or with phases of theological thought and religious tendency, however valuable in contemporary discussion, and to men and movements of the third quarter of the century, must be set on one side. It is not because of anything there contained that he has become a permanent figure of his time, or is of interest in literature. He achieved distinction as a critic and as a poet; but although he was earlier in the field as a poet, he was first recognized by the public at large as a critic. The union of the two functions is not unusual in the story of literature; but where success has been attained in both, the critic has commonly sprung from the poet in the man, and his range and quality have been limited thereby. It was so with Dry-

den and Wordsworth, and, less obviously, with Landor and Lowell. In Arnold's case there was no such growth: the two modes of writing, prose and verse, were disconnected. One might read his essays without suspecting a poet, and his poems without discerning a critic, except so far as one finds the moralist there. In fact, Arnold's critical faculty belonged rather to the practical side of his life, and was a part of his talents as a public man.

This appears by the very definitions that he gave, and by the turn of his phrase, which always keeps an audience rather than a meditative reader in view. "What is the function of criticism at the present time?" he asks, and answers — "A disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." That is a wide warrant. The writer who exercises his critical function under it, however, is plainly a reformer at heart, and labors for the social welfare. He is not an analyst of the form of art for its own sake, or a contemplator of its substance of wisdom or beauty merely. He is not limited to literature or the other arts of expression, but the world — the intel-

lectual world — is all before him where to choose; and having learned the best that is known and thought, his second and manifestly not inferior duty is to go into all nations, a messenger of the propaganda of intelligence. It is a great mission, and nobly characterized; but if criticism be so defined, it is criticism of a large mould.

The scope of the word conspicuously appears also in the phrase, which became proverbial, declaring that literature is "a criticism of life." In such an employment of terms, ordinary meanings evaporate; and it becomes necessary to know the thought of the author rather than the usage of men. Without granting the dictum, therefore, which would be far from the purpose, is it not clear that by "critic" and "criticism" Arnold intended to designate, or at least to convey, something peculiar to his own conception, — not strictly related to literature at all, it may be, but more closely tied to society in its general mental activity? In other words, Arnold was a critic of civilization more than of books, and aimed at illumination by means of ideas. With this goes his manner, — that habitual air of telling you

something which you did not know before, and doing it for your good, which stamps him as a preacher born. Under the mask of the critic is the long English face of the gospeler; that type whose persistent physiognomy was never absent from the conventicle of English thought.

This evangelizing prepossession of Arnold's mind must be recognized in order to understand alike his attitude of superiority, his stiffly didactic method, and his success in attracting converts in whom the seed proved barren. The first impression that his entire work makes is one of limitation; so strict is this limitation, and it profits him so much, that it seems the element in which he had his being. On a close survey, the fewness of his ideas is most surprising, though the fact is somewhat cloaked by the lucidity of his thought, its logical vigor, and the manner of its presentation. He takes a text, either some formula of his own or some adopted phrase that he has made his own, and from that he starts out only to return to it again and again with ceaseless iteration. In his illustrations, for example, when he has pilloried some poor gentleman, otherwise

unknown, for the astounded and amused contemplation of the Anglican monocle, he cannot let him alone. So too when, with the journalist's knack for nicknames, he divides all England into three parts, he cannot forget the rhetorical exploit. He never lets the points he has made fall into oblivion; and hence his work in general, as a critic, is skeletonized to the memory in watchwords, formulas, and nicknames, which, taken altogether, make up only a small number of ideas.

His scale, likewise, is meagre. His essay is apt to be a book review or a plea merely; it is without that free allusiveness and undeveloped suggestion which indicate a full mind and give to such brief pieces of writing the sense of overflow. He takes no large subject as a whole, but either a small one or else some phases of the larger one; and he exhausts all that he touches. He seems to have no more to say. It is probable that his acquaintance with literature was incommensurate with his reputation or apparent scope as a writer. As he has fewer ideas than any other author of his time of the same rank, so he discloses less knowledge of his own or

foreign literatures. His occupations forbade wide acquisition; he husbanded his time, and economized also by giving the best direction to his private studies; and he accomplished much; but he could not master the field as any man whose profession was literature might easily do. Consequently, in comparison with Coleridge or Lowell, his critical work seems dry and bare, with neither the fluency nor the richness of a master.

In yet another point this paucity of matter appears. What Mr. Richard Holt Hutton says in his essay on the poetry of Arnold is so apposite here that it will be best to quote the passage. He is speaking, in an aside, of Arnold's criticisms: —

"They are fine, they are keen, they are often true; but they are always too much limited to the thin superficial layer of the moral nature of their subjects, and seem to take little comparative interest in the deeper individuality beneath. Read his essay on Heine, and you will see the critic engrossed with the relation of Heine to the political and social ideas of his day, and passing over with comparative indifference the true soul of Heine, the fountain of both his poetry and his cynicism. Read his five lectures on translating Homer, and observe how exclusively the critic's mind is occupied with the form as distinguished from the substance of the Homeric poetry. Even when he concerns him-

self with the greatest modern poets, — with Shakespeare as in the preface to the earlier edition of his poems, or with Goethe in reiterated poetical criticisms, or when he again and again in his poems treats of Wordsworth, — it is always the style and superficial doctrine of their poetry, not the individual character and unique genius, which occupy him. He will tell you whether a poet is 'sane and clear,' or stormy and fervent; whether he is rapid and noble, or loquacious and quaint; whether a thinker penetrates the husks of conventional thought which mislead the crowd; whether there is sweetness as well as lucidity in his aims; whether a descriptive writer has 'distinction' of style, or is admirable only for his vivacity: but he rarely goes to the individual heart of any of the subjects of his criticism; he finds their style and class, but not their personality in that class; he *ranks* his men, but does not portray them; hardly even seems to find much interest in the *individual* roots of their character."

In brief, this is to say that Arnold took little interest in human nature; nor is there anything in his later essays on Byron, Keats, Wordsworth, Milton, or Gray, to cause us to revise the judgment on this point. In fact, so far as he touched on the personality of Keats or Gray, to take the capital instances, he was most unsatisfactory.

Arnold was not, then, one of those critics who are interested in life itself,

and through the literary work seize on the soul of the author in its original brightness, or set forth the life-stains in the successive incarnations of his heart and mind. Nor was he of those who consider the work itself final, and endeavor simply to understand it, — form and matter, — and so to mediate between genius and our slower intelligence. He followed neither the psychological or the æsthetic method. It need hardly be said that he was born too early to be able ever to conceive of literature as a phenomenon of society, and its great men as only terms in an evolutionary series. He had only a moderate knowledge of literature, and his stock of ideas was small; his manner of speech was hard and dry, there was a trick in his style, and his self-repetition is tiresome.

What gave him vogue, then, and what still keeps his volumes of essays alive? Is it anything more than the temper in which he worked, and the spirit which he evoked in the reader? He stood for the very spirit of intelligence in his time. He made his readers respect ideas, and want to have as many as possible. He enveloped them in an atmosphere of mental curiosity

and alertness, and put them in contact with novel and attractive themes. In particular, he took their minds to the Continent and made them feel that they were becoming cosmopolitan by knowing Joubert; or at home, he rallied them in opposition to the dullness of the period, to "barbarism" or other objectionable traits in the social classes: and he volleyed contempt upon the common multitudinous foe in general, and from time to time cheered them with some delectable examples of single combat. It cannot be concealed that there was much malicious pleasure in it all. He was not indisposed to high-bred cruelty. Like Lamb, he "loved a fool," but it was in a mortar; and pleasant it was to see the spectacle when he really took a man in hand for the chastisement of irony. It is thus that "the *seraphim illuminati* sneer." And in all his controversial writing there was a brilliancy and unsparingness that will appeal to the deepest instincts of a fighting race, willy-nilly; and as one had only to read the words to feel himself among the children of light, so that our withers were unwrung, there was high enjoyment.

This liveliness of intellectual conflict, together with the sense of ideas, was a boon to youth especially; and the academic air in which the thought and style always moved, with scholarly self-possession and assurance, with the dogmatism of "enlightenment" in all ages and among all sects, with serenity and security unassailable, from within at least — this academic "clearness and purity without shadow or stain" had an overpowering charm to the college-bred and cultivated, who found the rare combination of information, taste, and aggressiveness in one of their own ilk. Above all, there was the play of intelligence on every page; there was an application of ideas to life in many regions of the world's interests; there was contact with a mind keen, clear, and firm, armed for controversy or persuasion equally, and filled with eager belief in itself, its ways, and its will.

To meet such personality in a book was a bracing experience; and for many these essays were an awakening of the mind itself. We may go to others for the greater part of what criticism can give, — for definite and fundamental principles,

for adequate characterization, for the intuition and the revelation, the penetrant flash of thought and phrase: but Arnold generates and supports a temper of mind in which the work of these writers best thrives even in its own sphere; and through him this temper becomes less individual than social, encompassing the whole of life. Few critics have been really less "disinterested," few have kept their eyes less steadily "upon the object": but that fact does not lessen the value of his precepts of disinterestedness and objectivity; nor is it necessary in becoming "a child of light," to join in spirit the unhappy "remnant" of the academy, or to drink too deep of that honeyed satisfaction, with which he fills his readers, of being on his side. As a critic, Arnold succeeds if his main purpose does not fail, and that was to reinforce the party of ideas, of culture, of the children of light; to impart, not moral vigor, but openness and reasonableness of mind; and to arouse and arm the intellectual in contradistinction to the other energies of civilization.

The poetry of Arnold, to pass to the second portion of his work, was less widely

welcomed than his prose, and made its way very slowly; but it now seems the more important and permanent part. It is not small in quantity, though his unproductiveness in later years has made it appear that he was less fluent and abundant in verse than he really was. The remarkable thing, as one turns to his poems, is the contrast in spirit that they afford to the essays: there is here an atmosphere of entire calm. We seem to be in a different world. This fact, with the singular silence of his familiar letters in regard to his verse, indicates that his poetic life was truly a thing apart.

In one respect only is there something in common between his prose and verse: just as interest in human nature is absent in the former, it is absent also in the latter. There is no action in the poems; neither is there character for its own sake. Arnold was a man of the mind, and he betrays no interest in personality except for its intellectual traits; in Clough as in Obermann, it is the life of thought, not the human being, that he portrays. As a poet, he expresses the moods of the meditative spirit in view of nature and our

moral existence; and he represents life, not lyrically by its changeful moments, nor tragically by its conflict in great characters, but philosophically by a self-contained and unvarying monologue, deeper or less deep in feeling and with cadences of tone, but always with the same grave and serious effect. He is constantly thinking, whatever his subject or his mood; his attitude is intellectual, his sentiments are maxims, his conclusions are advisory. His world is the sphere of thought, and his poems have the distance and repose and also the coldness that befit that sphere; and the character of his imagination, which lays hold of form and reason, makes natural to him the classical style.

It is obvious that the sources of his poetical culture are Greek. It is not merely, however, that he takes for his early subjects Merope and Empedocles, or that he strives in Balder Dead for Homeric narrative, or that in the recitative to which he was addicted he evoked an immelodious phantom of Greek choruses; nor is it the "marmoreal air" that chills while it ennobles much of his finest work. One

feels the Greek quality not as a source, but as a presence. In Tennyson, Keats, and Shelley, there was Greek influence, but in them the result was modern. In Arnold the antiquity remains; remains in mood, just as in Landor it remains in form. The Greek twilight broods over all his poetry. It is pagan in philosophic spirit; not Attic, but of a later and stoical time, with the very virtues of patience, endurance, suffering, not in their Christian types, but as they now seem to a post-Christian imagination looking back to the imperial past. There is a difference, it is true, in Arnold's expression of the mood: he is as little Sophoclean as he is Homeric, as little Lucretian as he is Vergilian. The temperament is not the same, not a survival or a revival of the antique, but original and living. And yet the mood of the verse is felt at once to be a reincarnation of the deathless spirit of Hellas that in other ages also has made beautiful and solemn for a time the shadowed places of the Christian world. If one does not realize this, he must miss the secret of the tranquillity, the chill, the grave austerity, as well as the philosophical resig-

nation, which are essential to the verse. Even in those parts of the poems which use romantic motives, one reason of their original charm is that they suggest how the Greek imagination would have dealt with the forsaken merman, the church of Brou, and Tristram and Iseult. The presence of such motives, such mythology, and such Christian and chivalric color in the work of Arnold does not disturb the simple unity of its feeling, which finds no solvent for life, whatever its accident of time and place and faith, except in that Greek spirit which ruled in thoughtful men before the triumph of Christianity, and is still native in men who accept the intellect as the sole guide of life.

It was with reference to these modern men and the movement they took part in, that he made his serious claim to greatness; to rank, that is, with Tennyson and Browning, as he said, in the literature of his time. "My poems," he wrote, "represent on the whole the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century; and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested

in the literary productions that reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigor and abundance than Browning; yet because I have, perhaps, more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs." If the main movement had been such as he thought of it, or if it had been of importance in the long run, there might be a sounder basis for this hope than now appears to be the case; but there can be no doubt, let the contemporary movement have been what it may, that Arnold's mood is one that will not pass out of men's hearts to-day nor to-morrow.

On the modern side the example of Wordsworth was most formative, and in fact it is common to describe Arnold as a Wordsworthian: and so, in his contemplative attitude to nature, and in his habitual recourse to her, he was; but both nature herself as she appeared to him, and his mood in her presence, were very different from Wordsworth's conception and emo-

tion. Arnold finds in nature a refuge from life, an anodyne, an escape; but Wordsworth, in going into the hills for poetical communion, passed from a less to a fuller and deeper life, and obtained an inspiration, and was seeking the goal of all his being. In the method of approach, too, as well as in the character of the experience, there was a profound difference between the two poets. Arnold sees with the outward rather than the inward eye. He is pictorial in a way that Wordsworth seldom is; he uses detail much more, and gives a group or a scene with the externality of a painter. The method resembles that of Tennyson rather than that of Wordsworth, and has more direct analogy with the Greek manner than with the modern and emotional schools; it is objective, often minute, and always carefully composed, in the artistic sense of that term. The description of the river Oxus, for example, though faintly charged with suggested and allegoric meaning, is a noble close to the poem which ends in it. The scale is large, and Arnold was fond of a broad landscape of mountains, and prospects over the land; but one can-

not fancy Wordsworth writing it. So too, on a small scale, the charming scene of the English garden in Thyrsis is far from Wordsworth's manner: —

"When garden walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut-flowers are strewn —
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze."

This is a picture that could be framed: how different from Wordsworth's "wandering voice"! Or to take another notable example, which, like the Oxus passage, is a fine close in the Tristram and Iseult, — the hunter on the arras above the dead lovers: —

"A stately huntsman, clad in green,
And round him a fresh forest scene.
On that clear forest-knoll he stays,
With his pack round him, and delays.
* * * * * *
The wild boar rustles in his lair,
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air,
But lord and hounds keep rooted there.
Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O hunter! and without a fear
Thy golden tasseled bugle blow — "

But no one is deceived, and the hunter does not move from the arras, but is still

"rooted there," with his green suit and his golden tassel. The piece is pictorial, and highly wrought for pictorial effects only, obviously decorative and used as stage scenery precisely in the manner of our later theatrical art, with that accent of forethought which turns the beautiful into the æsthetic. This is a method which Wordsworth never used. Take one of his pictures, the Reaper for example, and see the difference. The one is out-of-doors, the other is of the studio. The purpose of these illustrations is to show that Arnold's nature-pictures are not only consciously artistic, with an arrangement that approaches artifice, but that he is interested through his eye primarily and not through his emotions. It is characteristic of his temperament also that he reminds one most often of the painter in water-colors.

If there is this difference between Arnold and Wordsworth in method, a greater difference in spirit is to be anticipated. It is a fixed gulf. In nature Wordsworth found the one spirit's "plastic stress," and a near and intimate revelation to the soul of truths that were his greatest joy

and support in existence. Arnold finds there no inhabitancy of God, no such streaming forth of wisdom and beauty from the fountain heads of being; but the secret frame of nature is filled only with the darkness, the melancholy, the waiting endurance that is projected from himself: —

> "Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
> The solemn hills about us spread,
> The stream that falls incessantly,
> The strange-scrawled rocks, the lonely sky,
> If I might lend their life a voice,
> Seem to bear rather than rejoice."

Compare this with Wordsworth's Stanzas on Peele Castle, and the important reservations that must be borne in mind in describing Arnold as a Wordsworthian will become clearer. It is as a relief from thought, as a beautiful and half-physical diversion, as a scale of being so vast and mysterious as to reduce the pettiness of human life to nothingness, — it is in these ways that nature has value in Arnold's verse. Such a poet may describe natural scenes well, and obtain by means of them contrast to human conditions, and decorative beauty; but he does not penetrate

nature or interpret what her significance is in the human spirit, as the more emotional poets have done. He ends in an antithesis, not in a synthesis, and both nature and man lose by the divorce. One looks in vain for anything deeper than landscapes in Arnold's treatment of nature; she is emptied of her own infinite, and has become spiritually void: and in the simple great line in which he gave the sea —

> "The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea —"

he is thinking of man, not of the ocean: and the mood seems ancient rather than modern, the feeling of a Greek, just as the sound of the waves to him is always Ægean.

In treating of man's life, which must be the main thing in any poet's work, Arnold is either very austere or very pessimistic. If the feeling is moral, the predominant impression is of austerity; if it is intellectual, the predominant impression is of sadness; he was not insensible to the charm of life, but he feels it in his senses only to deny it in his mind. The illustrative passage is from Dover Beach : —

"Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain."

This is the contradiction of sense and thought, the voice of a regret grounded in the intellect (for if it were vital and grounded in the emotions, it would become despair); the creed of illusion and futility in life, which is the characteristic note of Arnold, and the reason of his acceptance by many minds. The one thing about life which he most insists on is its isolation, its individuality. In the series called "Switzerland," this is the substance of the whole; and the doctrine is stated with an intensity and power, with an amplitude and prolongation, that set these poems apart as the most remarkable of all his lyrics. From a poet so deeply impressed with this aspect of existence, and unable to find its remedy or its counterpart in the harmony of life, no joyful or hopeful word can be expected, and none is found. The second thing about life which he dwells on is its fu-

tility; though he bids one strive and work, and points to the example of the strong whom he has known, yet one feels that his voice rings more true when he writes of Obermann than in any other of the elegiac poems. In such verse as the Summer Night, again, the genuineness of the mood is indubitable. In The Sick King of Bokhara, the one dramatic expression of his genius, futility is the very centre of the action. The fact that so much of his poetry seems to take its motive from the subsidence of Christian faith has set him among the skeptic or agnostic poets, and the "main movement" which he believed he had expressed was doubtless that in which agnosticism was a leading element. The unbelief of the third quarter of the century was certainly a controlling influence over him, and in a man mainly intellectual by nature it could not well have been otherwise.

Hence, as one looks at his more philosophical and lyrical poems — the profounder part of his work — and endeavors to determine their character and sources alike, it is plain to see that in the old phrase, "the pride of the intellect" lifts

its lonely column over the desolation of every page. The man of the academy is here, as in the prose, after all. He reveals himself in the literary motive, the bookish atmosphere of the verse, in its vocabulary, its elegance of structure, its precise phrase and its curious allusions (involving foot-notes), and in fact, throughout all its form and structure. So self-conscious is it that it becomes frankly prosaic at inconvenient times, and is more often on the level of eloquent and graceful rhetoric than of poetry. It is frequently liquid and melodious, but there is no burst of native song in it anywhere. It is the work of a true poet, nevertheless; for there are many voices for the Muse. It is sincere, it is touched with reality; it is the mirror of a phase of life in our times, and not in our times only, but whenever the intellect seeks expression for its sense of the limitation of its own career, and its sadness in a world which it cannot solve.

A word should be added concerning the personality of Arnold which is revealed in his familiar letters, — a collection that has dignified the records of literature with

a singularly noble memory of private life. Few who did not know Arnold could have been prepared for the revelation of a nature so true, so amiable, so dutiful. In every relation of private life he is shown to have been a man of exceptional constancy and plainness. The letters are mainly home letters; but a few friendships also yielded up their hoard, and thus the circle of private life is made complete. Every one must take delight in the mental association with Arnold in the scenes of his existence, thus daily exposed, and in his family affections. A nature warm to its own, kindly to all, cheerful, fond of sport and fun, and always fed from pure fountains, and with it a character so founded upon the rock, so humbly serviceable, so continuing in power and grace, must wake in all the responses of happy appreciation, and leave the charm of memory.

He did his duty as naturally as if it required neither resolve, nor effort, nor thought of any kind for the morrow, and he never failed, seemingly, in act or word of sympathy, in little or great things; and when, to this, one adds the clear ether of the intellectual life where he habitually

moved in his own life apart, and the humanity of his home, the gift that these letters bring may be appreciated. That gift is the man himself; but set in the atmosphere of home, with sonship and fatherhood, sisters and brothers, with the bereavements of years fully accomplished, and those of babyhood and boyhood, — a sweet and wholesome English home, with all the cloud and sunshine of the English world drifting over its roof-tree, and the soil of England beneath its stones, and English duties for the breath of its being. To add such a home to the household-rights of English literature is perhaps something from which Arnold would have shrunk, but it endears his memory.

COLERIDGE.

THE poetic genius of Coleridge, the highest of his many gifts, found brilliant and fascinating expression. His poems — those in which his fame lives — are as unique as they are memorable; and though their small number, their confined range, and the brief period during which his faculty was exercised with full freedom and power, seem to indicate a narrow vein, yet the remainder of his work in prose and verse leaves an impression of extraordinary and abundant intellectual force. In proportion as his imaginative creations stand apart, the spirit out of which they came must have possessed some singularity: and if the reader is not content with simple æsthetic appreciation of what the gods provide, but has some touch of curiosity leading him to look into the source of such remarkable achievement and its human history, he is at once interested in the personality of the "subtle-souled psychologist," as Shelley with his accurate critical

insight first named him; in experiencing the fascination of the poetry one remembers the charm which Coleridge had in life, that quality which arrested attention in all companies and drew men's minds and hearts with a sense of something marvelous in him — "the most wonderful man," said Wordsworth, "that I ever met." The mind and heart of Coleridge, his whole life, have been laid open by himself and his friends and acquaintances without reserve in many volumes of letters and memoirs; it is easy to figure him as he lived and to recover his moods and aspect: but in order to conceive his nature and define its traits, it is necessary to take account especially of his incomplete and less perfect work, of his miscellaneous interests, and those activities which filled and confused his life without having any important share in establishing his fame.

The intellectual precocity which is the leading trait of Coleridge's boyhood, in the familiar portrait of "the inspired charity-boy" drawn by Lamb from schoolboy memories, is not unusual in a youth of genius; but the omnivorousness of knowledge which he then displayed con-

tinued into his manhood. He consumed vast quantities of book-learning. It is a more remarkable characteristic that from the earliest period in which he comes into clear view, he was accustomed to give out his ideas with freedom in an inexhaustible stream of talk. The activity of his mind was as phenomenal as its receptivity. In his college days, too, he was fanatical in all his energies. The remark of Southey after Shelley's visit to him, that here was a young man who was just what he himself had been in his college days, is illustrative; for if Southey was then inflamed with radicalism, Coleridge was yet more deeply infected and mastered by that wild fever of the revolutionary dawn. The tumult of Coleridge's mind, its incessant action, the lack of discipline in his thought, of restraint in his expression, of judgment in his affairs, are all important elements in his character at a time which in most men would be called the formative period of manhood, but which in him seems to have been intensely chaotic; what is most noticeable, however, is the volume of his mental energy. He expressed himself, too, in ways natural to such self-abun-

dance. He was always a discourser, if the name may be used, from the London days at the "Salutation and the Cat" of which Lamb tells, saying that the landlord was ready to retain him because of the attraction of his conversation for customers; and as he went on to the more set forms of such monologue, he became a preacher without pay in Unitarian chapels, a journalist with unusual capacity for ready and sonorous writing in the press, a composer of whole periodicals such as his ventures *The Watchman* and *The Friend*, and a lecturer using only slight notes as the material of his remarks upon literature, education, philosophy, theology, or whatever the subject might be. In all these methods of expression which he took up one after the other, he merely talked in an ample way upon multifarious topics; in the conversation, sermon, leading article, written discourse, or flowing address, he was master of a swelling and often brilliant volubility, but he had neither the certainty of the orator nor the unfailing distinction of the author; there was an occasional and impromptu quality, a colloquial and episodical manner, the style of

the irresponsible speaker. In his earlier days especially, the dominant note in Coleridge's whole nature was excitement. He was always animated, he was often violent, he was always without the principle of control. Indeed, a weakness of moral power seems to have been congenital, in the sense that he was not permanently bound by a practical sense of duty nor apparently observant of what place duty has in real life. There was misdirection of his affairs from the time when they came into his own hands; there was impulsiveness, thoughtlessness, a lack of judgment which augured ill for him; and in its total effect this amounted to folly. His intoxication with the scheme known as Pantisocracy, by which he with Southey and a few like-minded projectors were to found a socialistic community on the banks of the Susquehanna, is the most obvious comment on his practical sense. But his marriage, with the anecdotes of its preliminaries (one of which was that in those colloquies with Lamb at the London tavern, so charmingly described by his boon companion, he had forgotten his engagement or was indifferent to it), more

strikingly exemplifies the irresponsible course of his life, more particularly as it proved to be ill-sorted, full of petty difficulties and makeshift expedients, and in the end a disastrous failure. A radical social scheme and an imprudent marriage might have fallen to his share of human folly, however, without exciting remark, if in other ways or at a later time he had exhibited the qualities which would allow one to dismiss these matters as mere instances of immaturity; but wherever Coleridge's reasonable control over himself or his affairs is looked to, it appears to have been feeble. On the other hand, the constancy of his excitement is plain. It was not only mental, but physical. He was, as a young man, full of energy and capable of a good deal of hard exercise; he had animal spirits, and Wordsworth describes him as "noisy" and "gamesome," as one who

> "His limbs would toss about him with delight,
> Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy;"

and from several passages of his own writing, which are usually disregarded, the evidence of a spirit of rough humor and

fun is easily obtained. The truth is that Coleridge changed a great deal in his life; he felt himself to be very different in later years from what he was in the time when, to his own memory he was a sort of glorified spirit: and this earlier Coleridge had many traits which are ignored sometimes, as Carlyle ignored them, and are sometimes remembered rather as idealizations of his friends in their affectionate thoughts of him, but in any event are irreconcilable with the figure of the last period of his life.

It has been suggested that there was something of disease or at least of ill health in Coleridge always, and that it should be regarded as influencing his temperament. Whether it were so or not, the plea itself shows the fact. If excitement was the dominant note, as has been said, in his whole nature, it could not exist without a physical basis and accompaniment; and his bodily state appears to have been often less one of animation than of agitation, and his correspondence frequently discloses moods that seem almost frantic. In the issue, under stress of pain and trouble, he became an opium-eater;

but his physical nature may fairly be described as predisposed to such states as lead to the use of opium and also result from its use, with the attendant mental moods. His susceptibility to sensuous impressions, to a voluptuousness of the entire being, together with a certain lassitude and languor, lead to the same conclusion, which thus seems to be supported on all sides, — that Coleridge was, in his youth and early manhood, fevered through all his intellectual and sensuous nature, and deficient on the moral and practical sides in those matters that related to his personal affairs. It is desirable to bring this out in plain terms, because in Coleridge it is best to acknowledge at once that his character was, so far as our part — the world's part — in him is concerned, of less consequence than his temperament; a subtler and more profound thing than character, though without moral meaning. It is not unfair to say, since literature is to be regarded most profitably as the expression of human personality, that with Coleridge the modern literature of temperament, as it has been lately recognized in extreme phases, begins; not that tem-

perament is a new thing in the century now closing, nor that it has been without influence hitherto, but that now it is more often considered, and has in fact more often been, an exclusive ground of artistic expression. The temperament of Coleridge was one of diffused sensuousness physically, and of abnormal mental moods, — moods of weakness, languor, collapse, of visionary imaginative life with a night atmosphere of the spectral, moonlit, swimming, scarcely substantial world; and the poems he wrote, which are the contributions he made to the world's literature, are based on this temperament, like some Fata Morgana upon the sea. The apparent exclusion of reality from the poems in which his genius was most manifest finds its analogue in the detachment of his own mind from the moral, the practical, the usual in life as he led it in his spirit; and his work of the highest creative sort, which is all there is to his enduring fame, stands amid his prose and verse composition of a lower sort like an island in the waste of waters. This may be best shown, perhaps, by a gradual approach through his cruder to his most perfect compositions.

The cardinal fact in Coleridge's genius is that notwithstanding his immense sensuous susceptibilities and mental receptivity, and the continual excitement of his spirit, he never rose into the highest sphere of creative activity except for the brief period called his *annus mirabilis*, when his great poems were written; and with this is the further related fact that in him we witness the spectacle of the imaginative instinct overborne and supplanted by the intellectual faculty exercising its speculative and critical functions; and in addition, one observes in his entire work an extraordinary inequality not only of treatment, but also of subject-matter. In general, he was an egoistic writer. His sensitiveness to nature was twofold: in the first place he noticed in the objects and movements of nature evanescent and minute details, and as his sense of beauty was keen, he saw and recorded truly the less obvious and less common loveliness in the phenomena of the elements and the seasons, and this gave distinction to his mere description and record of fact; in the second place he often felt in himself moods induced by

nature, but yet subjective, — states of his own spirit, which sometimes deepened the charm of night, for example, by his enjoyment of its placid aspects, and sometimes imparted to the external world a despair reflected from his personal melancholy. In his direct treatment of nature, however, as Mr. Stopford Brooke points out, he seldom achieves more than a catalogue of his sensations, which though touched with imaginative detail are never lifted and harmonized into lyrical unity; though he can moralize nature in Wordsworth's fashion, when he does so the result remains Wordsworth's and is stamped with that poet's originality; and in his own original work Coleridge never equaled either the genius of Shelley, who can identify nature with himself, or the charm of Tennyson, who can at least parallel nature's phenomena with his own human moods. Coleridge would not be thought of as a poet of nature, except in so far as he describes what he observes in the way of record, or gives a metaphysical interpretation to phenomena. This is the more remarkable because he had to an eminent degree that intellectual power, that over-

mastering desire of the mind, to rationalize the facts of life. It was this quality that made him a philosopher, an analyst, a critic on the great lines of Aristotle, seeking to impose an order of ethics and metaphysics on all artistic productions. But in those poems in which he describes nature directly and without metaphysical thought, there is no trace of anything more than a sensuous order of his own perceptions. Beautiful and often unique as his nature poems are, they are not creative. They are rather in the main autobiographic; and it is surprising to notice how large a proportion of his verse is thus autobiographic, not in those phases of his own life which may be, or at least are thought of, as representative of human life in the mass, but which are personal, such as the lines written after hearing Wordsworth read the Prelude, or those entitled Dejection. When his verse is not confined to autobiographic expression, it is often a product of his interest in his friends or in his family. What is not personal in it, of this sort, is apt to be domestic or social.

If we turn from the poems of nature to

those concerned with man, a similar shallowness, either of interest or of power, appears. He was in early years a radical; he was stirred by the Revolution in France, and he was emotionally charged with the ideas of the time, — ideas of equality, fraternity, and liberty. But this interest died out, as is shown by his political verse. He had none but a social and a philosophical interest in any case. Man, the individual, did not at any time attract him. There was nothing dramatic in his genius, in the narrow and exact sense; he did not engage his curiosity or his philosophy in individual fortunes. It results from this limitation that his verse lacks human interest of the dramatic kind. The truth was that he was interested in thought rather than in deeds, in human nature rather than in its concrete pity and terror. Thus he did not seize on life itself as the material of his imagination and reflection. In the case of man as in the case of nature he gives us only an egoistic account, telling us of his own private fortune, his fears, pains, and despairs, but only as a diary gives them; as he did not transfer his nature impressions

into the world of creative art, so he did not transfer his personal experiences into that world.

What has been said would perhaps be accepted, were it not for the existence of those poems, The Ancient Mariner, Christabel, Kubla Khan, which are the marvelous creations of his genius. In these it will be said there is both a world of nature new created, and a dramatic method and interest. It is enough for the purpose of the analysis if it be granted that nowhere else in Coleridge's work, except in these and less noticeably in a few other instances, do these high characteristics occur. The very point which is here to be brought out is that Coleridge applied that intellectual power, that overmastering desire of the mind to rationalize the phenomena of life, which has been mentioned as his great mental trait, — that he applied this faculty with different degrees of power at different times, so that his poetry falls naturally into higher and inferior categories; in the autobiographic verse, in the political and dramatic verse which form so large a part of his work, it appears that he did not have

sufficient feeling or exercise sufficient power to raise it out of the lower levels of composition; in his great works of constructive and impersonal art, of moral intensity or romantic beauty and fascination, he did so exercise the creative imagination as to make these of the highest rank, or at least one of them.

The Ancient Mariner, apart from its many minor merits, has this distinction in Coleridge's work, — it is a poem of perfect unity. Christabel is a fragment, Kubla Khan is a glimpse; and though the Ode to France, Love, Youth and Age, and possibly a few other short pieces, have this highest artistic virtue of unity, yet in them it is of a simpler kind. The Ancient Mariner, on the other hand, is a marvel of construction in that its unity is less complex than manifold; it exists, however the form be examined. In the merely external sense, the telling of the tale to the Wedding Guest, with the fact that the wedding is going on, gives it unity; in the merely internal sense, the moral lesson of the salvation of the slayer of the albatross by the medium of love felt toward living things, subtly

yet lucidly worked out as the notion is, gives it unity: but in still other ways, as a story of connected and consequential incidents with a plot, a change of fortune, a climax, and the other essentials of this species of tale-telling, it has unity; and if its conception either of the physical or the ethical world be analyzed, these too — and these are the fundamental things — are found consistent wholes. It nevertheless remains true that this system of nature as a vitalized but not humanized mode of life, with its bird, its spirit, its magical powers, is not the nature that we know or believe to be, — it is a modern presentation of an essentially primitive and animistic belief; and similarly this system of human life, — if the word human can be applied to it, with its dead men, its skeleton ship, its spirit sailors, its whole miracle of spectral being, — is not the life we know or believe to be; it is an incantation, a simulacrum. It may still be true therefore that the imaginative faculty of Coleridge was not applied either to nature or human life, in the ordinary sense. And this it is that constitutes the uniqueness of the poem, and its wonderful fascination.

Coleridge fell heir, by the accidents of time and the revolutions of taste, to the ballad style, its simplicity, directness, and narrative power; he also was most attracted to the machinery of the supernatural, the weird, the terrible, almost to the grotesque and horrid, as these literary motives came into fashion in the crude beginnings of romanticism in that time; his subtle mind, his fine senses, his peculiar susceptibility to the mystic and shadowy in nature, — as shown by his preference of the moonlight, dreamy, or night aspects of real nature, to its brilliant beauties in the waking world, — gave him ease and finesse in the handling of such subject-matter; and he lived late enough to know that all this eerie side of human experience and imaginative capacity, inherited from primeval ages but by no means yet deprived of plausibility, could be effectively used only as an allegoric or scenic setting of what should be truth to the ethical sense; he combined one of the highest lessons of advanced civilization, one of the last results of spiritual perception, — the idea of love toward life in any form, — with the animistic beliefs and supernatural fancies of the

crude ages of the senses. This seems to be the substantial matter; and in this he was, to repeat Shelley's phrase, the "subtle-souled psychologist." The material of his imagination, on the sensuous side, was of the slightest: it was the supernaturalism of the romantic movement, somewhat modified by being placed in connection with the animal world; and he put this to use as a means of illustrating spiritual truth. He thus became the first of those who have employed the supernatural in our recent literature, without losing credence for it, as an allegory of psychological states, moral facts, or illusions real to the eye that sees them and having some logical relation to the past of the individual; of such writers Hawthorne and Poe are eminent examples, and both of them, it may be remarked, are writers in whom temperament rather than character is the ground of their creative work. The intimate kinship between imagination so directed and the speculative philosophical temper is plain to see. In Christabel, on the other hand, the moral substance is not apparent: the place filled by the moral ideas which are the

centres of the narrative in The Ancient Mariner, is taken here by emotional situations; but the supernaturalism is practically the same in both poems, and in both is associated with that mystery of the animal world to man, most concentrated and vivid in the fascination ascribed traditionally to the snake, which is the animal motive in Christabel as the goodness of the albatross is in The Ancient Mariner. In these poems the good and the bad omens that ancient augurs minded are made again dominant over men's imagination. Such are the signal and unique elements in these poems, which have besides that wealth of beauty in detail, of fine diction, of liquid melody, of sentiment, thought, and image, which belongs only to poetry of the highest order, and which is too obvious to require any comment. Kubla Khan is a poem of the same kind, in which the mystical effect is given almost wholly by landscape; it is to The Ancient Mariner and Christabel what protoplasm is to highly organized cells.

If it be recognized, then, that the imagery of Coleridge in the characteristic

parts of these cardinal poems is as pure allegory, is as remote from nature or man, as is the machinery of fairy-land and chivalry in Spenser, for example, and he obtains credibility by the psychological and ethical truth presented in this imagery, it is not surprising that his work is small in amount; for the method is not only a difficult one, but the poetic machinery itself is limited and meagre. The poverty of the subject-matter is manifest, and the restrictions to its successful use are soon felt. It may well be doubted whether Christabel would have gained by being finished. In The Ancient Mariner the isolation of the man is a great advantage; if there had been any companion for him, the illusion could not have been entire: as it is, what he experiences has the wholeness and truth within itself of a dream, or of a madman's world, — there is no standard of appeal outside of his own senses and mind, no real world; but in Christabel the serpentine fable goes on in a world of fact and action, and as soon as the course of the story involved this fable in the probabilities and actual occurrences of life, it might well be that

the tale would have turned into one of simple enchantment and magic, as seems likely from what has been told of its continuation; certainly it could not have equaled the earlier poem, or have been in the same kind with it, unless the unearthly magic, the spell, were finally completely dissolved into the world of moral truth as is the case with The Ancient Mariner. Coleridge found it still more impossible to continue Kubla Khan. It seems a fair inference to conclude that Coleridge's genius, however it suffered from the misfortunes and ills of his life, was in these works involved in a field, however congenial, yet of narrow range and infertile in itself. In poetic style it is to be observed that he kept what he had gained; the turbid diction of the earlier period never came back to trouble him, and the cadences he had formed still gave their music to his verse. The change, the decline, was not in his power of style; it was in his power of imagination, if at all, but the fault may have laid in the capacities of the subject-matter. A similar thing certainly happened in his briefer ballad poetry, in that of which Love,

The Three Graces, Alice Du Clos, and The Dark Ladie, are examples; the matter there, the machinery of the romantic ballad, was no longer capable of use; that sort of literature was dead from the exhaustion of its motives. The great Ode to France, in which he reached his highest point of eloquent and passionate expression, seems to mark the extinction in himself of the revolutionary impulse. On the whole, while the excellence of much of the remainder of his verse, even in later years, is acknowledged, and its originality in several instances, may it not be that in his greatest work Coleridge came to an end because of an impossibility in the kind itself? The supernatural is an accessory rather than a main element in the interpretation of life which literary genius undertakes; Coleridge so subordinates it here by making it contributory to a moral truth; but such a practice would seem to be necessarily incidental to a poet who was also so intellectual as Coleridge, and not to be adopted as a permanent method of self-expression.

From whatever cause, the fact was that

Coleridge ceased to create in poetry, and fell back on that fluent, manifold, voluminous faculty he possessed of absorbing and giving out ideas in vast quantities, as it were by bulk. He attended especially to the theory of art as he found it illustrated in the greatest poets, and he popularized among literary men a certain body of doctrine regarding criticism, its growth and methods; and in later years he worked out metaphysical theological views which he inculcated in ways which won for him recognition as a practical influence in contemporary church opinion. In these last years of his lecturing and discoursing in private, the figure he makes is pathetic, though Carlyle describes it with a grim humor, as any one may read in the Life of Sterling: over against that figure should be set the descriptions of the young Coleridge by Dorothy Wordsworth and Lamb; and after these perhaps the contrast which Coleridge himself draws between his spirit and his body may enable a reader to fuse the two — youth and age — into one. Whatever were the weaknesses of his nature and the trials of his life, he was deeply loved by friends of

many different minds, who if they grew cold, had paid at least once this tribute to the charm, the gentleness, and the delight of his human companionship.

SHELLEY'S POETRY: A SKETCH.

Shelley himself described his genius as in the main a moral one, and in this he made a correct analysis. It was fed by ideas derived from books, and sustained by a sympathy so intense as to become a passion for moral aims. He was intellectually the child of the Revolution; and from the moment that he drew thoughtful breath he was a disciple of the radicals in England. The regeneration of mankind was the cause that kindled his enthusiasm; and the changes he looked for were social as well as political. He spent his strength in advocacy of the doctrines of democracy, and in hostility to its obvious opponents established in the authority of Church and State, and in custom; he held the most advanced position, not only in religion, but in respect to the institution of marriage, the use of property, and the welfare of the masses of mankind. The first complete expression of his opinion, the precipitate from the ferment of his

boyish years, was given in Queen Mab, a crude poem after the style of Southey, by which he was long best and most unfavorably known; he recognized its immaturity, and sought to suppress a pirated edition published in his last years: the violent prejudice against him in England as an atheist was largely due to this early work, with its long notes, in connection with the decision of the court taking from him the custody of his children. The second expression of his opinions, similar in scope, was given five years later in The Revolt of Islam, a Spenserian poem in twelve books. In this work the increase of his poetic faculty is shown by his denial of a didactic aim, and by the series of scenes from nature and human life which is the web of the verse; but the subject of the poem is the regeneration of society, and the intellectual impulse which sustains it is political and philanthropic. Up to the time of its composition the main literary influence that governed him was Latin: now he began to feel the power of Greek literature; and partly in making responses to it, and partly by the expansion of his mind, he revolutionized his poetic method.

The result was that in the third and greatest of his works of this kind, Prometheus Unbound, he developed a new type in English, — the lyrical drama. The subject is still the regeneration of society: but the tale has grown into the drama; the ideas have generated abstract impersonations which have more likeness to elemental beings, to Titanic and mythological creations, than to humanity; while the interest intellectually is still held within the old limits of the general cause of mankind. The same principles, the same convictions, the same aims, fused in one moral enthusiasm, are here: but a transformation has come over their embodiment, — imagination has seized upon them, a new lyrical music has penetrated and sublimated them, and the poem so engendered and born is different in kind from those that went before; it holds a unique place in the literature of the world, and is the most passionate dream of the perfect social ideal ever moulded in verse. In a fourth work, Hellas, Shelley applied a similar method in an effort to treat the Greek Revolution as a single instance of the victory of the general cause which he had most at heart;

and in several shorter poems, especially odes, he from time to time took up the same theme. The ideal he sets forth in all these writings, clarifying as it goes on, is not different from the millennium of poets and thinkers in all ages: justice and liberty, love the supreme law, are the ends to be achieved, and moral excellence with universal happiness is the goal of all.

In the works which have been mentioned, and which contain the most of Shelley's substantial thought, the moral prepossession of his mind is most manifest; it belonged to the conscious part of his being, and would naturally be foremost in his most deliberate writing. It was, in my judgment, the central thing in his genius; but genius in working itself out displays special faculties of many kinds, which must be noticed in their own right. Shelley is, for example, considered as preeminently a poet of nature. His susceptibility to sensuous impressions was very great, his response to them in love of beauty and in joy in them was constant; and out of his intimacy with nature came not merely descriptive power and the habit of interpreting emotion through natural

images, such as many poets have compassed, but a peculiar faculty often noticed by his critics, usually called the myth-making faculty, which is thought of as racial rather than individual. During his residence in Italy he was steeped in the Greek spirit as it survives in the philosophy and poetry of antiquity; and it was in harmony with his mood that he should vitalize the elements. What is extraordinary is the success, the primitive ease, the magic, with which he did so. In the simple instances which recur to every one's memory — The Skylark, The Cloud, the Ode to the West Wind — he has rendered the sense of non-human, of elemental being; and in the characters of Prometheus Unbound — in Asia especially — he has created such beings, to which the spirits of the moon and earth as he evoked them seem natural concomitants, and to them he has given reality for the imagination. It is largely because he dealt in this witchery, this matter of primeval illusion, that he gives to some minds the impression of dwelling in an imaginary and unsubstantial world; and the flood of light and glory of color which he exhales

as an atmosphere about the substance of the verse, dazzle and often bewilder the reader whose eyes are yet to be familiarized with the shapes and air of his scene. But with few exceptions, while using this creative power by poetic instinct, he brings back the verse at the end, whether in the lyrics or the longer works, to "the hopes and fears of men." In the ordinary delineation of nature as it appears, his touch is sure and accurate, with a regard for detail which shows close observation, and a frequent minuteness which shows the contemporary of Coleridge and Wordsworth. The opening passage of Julian and Maddalo, the lines at Pisa on the bridge, and the fragment Marenghi, are three widely different examples.

Shelley was also strongly attracted by the narrative form for its own sake. He was always fond of a story from the days of his boyhood; and though the romantic cast of fiction in his youth, both in prose and verse, might indicate a lack of interest in life, in the taste for this he was not different from the time he lived in, and the way to reality lay then through this path. Rosalind and Helen was a tale

like others of its kind, made up of romantic elements; but the instinct which led Shelley to tell it, as he had told still cruder stories in his first romances at Eton, was fundamental in him, and led him afterward, still further refining his matter, to weave out of airy nothing The Witch of Atlas almost at the close of his career. The important matter is, to connect with these narrative beginnings in prose and verse his serious dramatic work, which has for its prime example The Cenci, otherwise standing too far apart from his life. In this drama he undertook to deal with the reality of human nature in its most difficult literary form, the tragedy; and the success with which he suppressed his ordinary exuberance of imagery and phrase and kept to a severe restraint, at the same time producing the one conspicuous example of tragedy in his century in England, has been often wondered at. In the unfinished Charles I. he made a second attempt; while in the various dramatic fragments other than this he seems to have contemplated a new form of romantic drama. It seems to me that this line of his development has been too little

studied; but there is space here only to make the suggestion.

Another subordinate division of Shelley's work lies in his treatment of the ideal of individual nobility and happiness apart from society. Of course in the character of Laon, and on the grand scale in that of Prometheus, he set forth traits of the individual ideal; but in both instances they were social reformers, and had a relation to mankind. In Alastor, on the contrary, the individual is dealt with for his own sole sake, and the youth is drawn in lines of melancholy beauty; he was of the same race as Laon, but existed only in his own poetic unhappiness; of the same race also was Prince Athanase, but the poem is too unfinished to permit us to say more than that as he is disclosed, he is only an individual. In Epipsychidion the same character reappears as a persistent type in Shelley's mind, with the traits that he most valued: and the conclusion there is the union of the lover and his beloved in the enchanted isle, far from the world, which also is familiar to readers of Shelley in other poems as a persistent idea in his mind. In these poems one finds

the recoil of Shelley's mind from the task of reform he had undertaken, the antipodes of the social leader in the lonely exile from all but the one kindred spirit, the sense of weariness, of defeat, of despair over the world — the refuge. It is natural, consequently, to feel that Shelley himself is near in these characters; that they are successive incarnations of his spirit, and frankly such. They are autobiographic with conscious art, and stand only at one remove from those lyrics of personal emotion which are unconscious, the cries of the spirit which have sung themselves into the heart of the world. Upon these lyrics, which stand apart from his deliberate work, — impulsive, overflowing, irresistible in their spontaneity, — it may be granted that his popular fame rests. Many of them are singularly perfect in poetic form naturally developed; they have the music which is as unforgettable as the tones of a human voice, as unmistakable, as personal, and which has winged them to fly through the world. They make one forget all the rest in Shelley himself, and they express his world-weary yet still aspiring soul. The most perfect of them,

in my judgment, is the Ode to the West Wind: in form it is faultless; and it blends in one expression the power he had to interpret nature's elemental life, the pathos of his own spirit, — portrayed more nobly than in the cognate passage of the Adonais, because more unconscious of itself, — and the supreme desire he had to serve the world with those thoughts blown now through the world: —

"Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind."

No other of the lyrics seems to me so comprehensive, so adequate. The Adonais only can compare with it for personal power, for the penetration of the verse with Shelley's spirit in its eloquent passion. Of that elegy the poetry is so direct, and the charm so immediate and constant, that it needs no other mention, further than to say that like the Sensitive Plant, it has more affinity with Shelley's lyrics than with his longer works.

Such are some of the characteristics of Shelley and the relations between his more important works. There is much more to say; but I will add only that in what

seems to me a cardinal point in the criticism of poetry, — the poet's conception of womanhood, — of all the poets of the century in England, Shelley is approached only by Burns in tenderness, and excels Burns in nobleness of feeling. The reputation of Shelley in his lifetime was but slight in the world; and it emerged only by slow stages from the neglect and obloquy which were his portion while he lived and when he died. In the brief recital of the events of his life, it is obvious at a glance that there is much which needs explanation and defense. The best defense was to throw all possible light upon his career, and that was done by all who knew him; so that his life is more minutely exposed from boyhood to his death than that of any other English poet. As a consequence of this, opinion regarding him has been much modified; and though it may still be stern, it is now seldom harsh. The opinions which were regarded as of evil influence, and the acts which were condemned as wrong acts, are open to all to understand and pass judgment upon, as they are related in many books; and in respect to these, each will have his

own mind. Whatever be the judgment, it must be agreed that the century has brought fame to Shelley, as a poet of the highest class and of a rare kind; and that as a man he has been an inspiration and almost a creed in many lives, and has won respect and affection from many hearts, and a singular devotion from some akin to that which his friends felt toward him. He has been loved as it is given to few strangers to be loved, — but that is apart from his poetry.

LANDOR.

MANY of the most sensitive and discriminating critics of this century have, in the suffrage for fame, listed themselves for Landor. He seemed almost to achieve immortality within his lifetime, so continuously was the subtle appreciation of the best yielded to him, from the far-off years when Shelley used, at Oxford, to declaim with enthusiasm passages from Gebir, to the time, that seems as yesterday, when Swinburne made his pilgrimage to Italy, to offer his tribute of adoration to the old man at the close of his solitary and troubled career; and still each finer spirit,

> "As he passes, turns,
> And bids fair peace be to his sable shroud."

During his long life he saw the springtime, and outlived the harvest, of the great poetic revival, and the labor of the Victorian poets

of the aftermath was half accomplished before his death; but from all these powerful contemporary influences he was free. He remained apart; and this single fact, attesting, as it does, extraordinary self-possession and assurance of purpose, suffices to make his character interesting, even were his work of inferior worth. As yet, however, even to the minds of cultivated men, he is hardly more than a great figure. He is known, praised, and remembered for particular scenes, dramatic fragments, occasional lyrics, quatrains. This is the natural fate of a discursive writer. It matters not that Landor was wide ranging; it matters not what spoils of thought, what images of beauty, he brought from those far eastern uplands which it was his boast to haunt: he failed to give unity to his work, to give interest to large portions of it, to command public attention for it as a whole. Indeed, his work as a whole does not command the attention even of the best. What does survive, too, lives only in the favor of a small circle. He forfeited popular fame at the beginning, when he selected themes that presuppose rare qualities in his audience, and adopted an antique style; but such considerations,

at least in their naked statement, do not tell the whole story. Other poets have missed immediate applause by dealing with subjects that assumed unusual largeness of soul, range of sympathy, and refinement of taste in their readers: like Shelley, singing of unheeded hopes and fears to which the world was to be wrought; like Wordsworth, narrating the myth of Troy. Other poets, in style, have set forth the object plainly, and left it to work its will on the heart and imagination, unaided by the romantic spell, the awakening glow, the silent but imperative suggestion, the overmastering passion that takes heart and imagination captive; and they have not lost their reward. A remote theme, an impersonal style, are not of themselves able to condemn a poet to long neglect. They may make wide appreciation of him impossible; they may explain the indifference of an imperfectly educated public; but they do not account for the fact that Landor is to be read, even by his admirers, in a book of selections, while the dust is shaken from the eight stout octavos that contain his works only by the professional man of letters.

What first strikes the student of Landor

is the lack of any development in his genius. This is one reason why Mr. Leslie Stephen, seizing on the characteristic somewhat rudely, and leaping to an ungracious conclusion, calls him "a glorified and sublime edition of the sixth-form schoolboy." Men whose genius is of this fixed type are rare in English literature, and not of the highest rank. They exhibit no radical change; they are at the beginning what they are at the end; their works do not belong to any particular period of their lives; they seem free from their age, and to live outside of it. Hence, in dealing with them, historical criticism — the criticism whose purpose is to explain rather than to judge — soon finds itself at fault. When the circumstances that determined the original bent of their minds have been set forth, there is nothing more to be said. With Landor, this bent seems to have been given by his classical training. To write Latin verses was the earliest serious employment of his genius, and his efforts were immediately crowned with success. These studies, falling in with natural inclinations and aptitudes, pledged him to a classical manner; they made real for him the myths and history of Greece and Rome;

they fed his devotion to the ancient virtues, — love of freedom, aspiration for the calm of wisdom, reverence for the dignity of heroism, delight in beauty for its own sake; they supported him in what was more distinctively his own, — his refinement in material tastes, his burning indignation, his defense of tyrannicide. These characteristics he had in youth; they were neither diminished nor increased in age. In youth, too, he displayed all his literary excellences and defects: the fullness and weight of line; the march of sentences; the obscurity arising from over-condensation of thought and abrupt and elliptical constructions; his command of the grand and impressive as well as the beautiful and charming in imagery; his fondness for heroic situation and for the loveliness of minute objects. This was a high endowment; why, then, do its literary results seem inadequate?

With all his gifts, Landor did not possess unifying power. He observed objects as they passed before him at hap-hazard, took them into his mind, and gave them back, untransformed, in their original disorder. He thought disconnectedly, and expressed his thoughts as they came, detached and sepa-

rate. This lack of unity did not result simply from his choice of the classical mode of treatment, or from a defect in logical or constructive power, although it was connected with these. The ability to fuse experience, to combine its elements and make them one, to give it back to the world, transformed, and yet essentially true, the real creative faculty, is proportioned very strictly to the self-assertive power of genius, to the energy of the reaction of the mind on nature and life; it springs from a strong personality. To say that Landor's personality was weak would be to stultify one's self; but yet the difference between Landor the man and Landor the author is so great as to make the two almost antithetical; and in his imaginative work, by which he must be judged, it is not too much to say that he denied and forswore his personality, and obliterated himself so far as was possible. He not only eliminated self from his style, and, after the classical manner, defined by Arnold, "relied solely on the weight and force of that which, with entire fidelity, he uttered," but he also eliminated self, so far as one can, from his subject. He did not bind his work together by the laws of his own mind; he did not

root it in the truth, as he saw truth; he did not interpenetrate and permeate it with his own beliefs, as the great masters have always done. His principles were at the best vague, hardly amounting to more than an unapplied enthusiasm for liberty, heroism, and the other great watchwords of social rather than individual life. These illuminate his work, but they do not give it consistency. It is crystalline in structure, beautiful, ordered, perfect in form when taken part by part, but conglomerate as a whole; it is a handful of jewels, many of which are singly of the most transparent and glowing light, but unrelated one to another, — placed in juxtaposition, but not set; and in the crystalline mass is imbedded grosser matter, and mingled with the jewels are stones of dull color and light weight. A lovely object caught his eye, and he set it forth in verse; a fine thought came to him, and he inserted it in his dialogues; but his days were not "bound each to each by natural piety," or by any other of the shaping principles of high genius. He was a spectator of life, not an actor in life. Nature was to him a panorama, wonderful, awful, beautiful, and he described its scenes down to its most minute

and evanescent details. History was his theatre, where the personages played great parts; and he recorded their words and gestures, always helping them with the device of the high buskin and something of a histrionic air. He was content to be thus guided from without; to have his intellectual activity determined by the chance of sensation and of reading, rather than by a well-thought-out and enthusiastic purpose of his own soul. And so he became hardly more than a mirror of beauty and an Æolian harp of thought; if the vision came, if the wind breathed, he responded.

This self-effacement, this impersonality, as it is called, in literature, is much praised. It is said to be classical, and there is an impression in some minds that such an abdication of the individual's prerogatives is the distinctive mark of classicism. There is no more misleading and confusing error in criticism. Not impersonality, but universality, is that mark; and this is by no means the same thing, differently stated. In any age, the first, although not the sole, characteristic of classical work is that it deals with universal truth, of interest to all men: and hence the poet is required to keep to him-

self his idiosyncrasies, hobbies, all that is simply his own ; all that is not identical with the common human nature ; all that men in large bodies cannot sympathize with, understand, and appreciate. Under these conditions direct self-revelation is exceptional. The poet usually expresses himself by so arranging his plot and developing his characters that they will illustrate the laws of life, as he sees these laws, without any direct statement, — though the Greek chorus is full of didactic sayings ; and he may also express himself by such a powerful presentation of the morality intrinsic in beautiful things and noble actions as "to soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of men," without any dogmatic insistence in his own person. In these ways Æschylus obliterated himself from his work just as much as Shakespeare, and no more ; Swift just as much as Aristophanes, and no more ; but the statement that Shakespeare or Swift obliterated themselves from their works needs only to be made to be laughed at. The faith of Æschylus, the wisdom of Sophocles, are in all their dramas ; Anacreon is in all his songs, Horace in all his odes. The lasting significance of their productions to mankind is derived from the

clearness, the power, the skill, with which they informed their works with their personality. These men had a philosophy of life, that underlay and unified their work. They rebuilt the world in their imagination, and gave it the laws of their own minds. Their spirits were active, moulding, shaping, creating, subduing the whole of nature and life to themselves. It is true that the ancients accomplished their purpose rather by thought, the moderns rather by emotion; but this difference is incidental to the change in civilization. Either instrument is sufficient for its end; but he who would now choose the ancient instead of the modern mode, narrows, postpones, and abbreviates his fame only less than Landor, in his youth, by writing in Latin. Whatever be the mode of its operation, the energy of personality is the very essence of effective genius.

That Landor had no philosophy of life, in the same sense as Shakespeare or Æschylus, is plain to any reader. Those who look on art, including poetry, as removed from ordinary human life, who think that its chief service to men lies in affording delight rather than in that quickening of the spirit of which delight is only the sign and efflores-

cence, would consider Landor's lack of this philosophy a virtue. It accounts largely for his failure to interest even the best in the larger part of his work, and especially for the discontinuity of his reflections. These reflections are always his own; and this fact may seem to make against the view that he eliminated self from his productions so far as possible. But the presence of personality in literature as a force, ordering a great whole and giving it laws, is a very different thing from its presence as a mere mouthpiece of opinion. The thoughts may be numerous, varied, wise, noble; they may have all the virtues of truth and grace; but if they are disparate and scattered, if they tend nowhither, if they leave the reader where they found him, if they subserve no ulterior purpose and accomplish no end, there is a wide gulf between them and the thoughts of Shakespeare and Æschylus, no less their own than were Landor's his. In the former, personality is a power; in the latter, it is only a voice. In Landor's eight volumes there are more fine thoughts, more wise apothegms, than in any other discursive author's works in English literature; but they do not tell on the mind. They bloom

like flowers in their gardens, but they crown no achievement. At the end, no cause is advanced, no goal is won. This incoherence and inefficiency proceed from the absence of any definite scheme of life, any compacted system of thought, any central principles, any strong, pervading, and ordering personality.

In the same way the objectivity of Landor's work, its naturalism as distinguished from imaginativeness, results from the same cause, but with the difference that, while the faults already mentioned are largely due to an imperfect equipment of the mind, his mode of art seems to have been adopted by conscious choice and of set purpose. The opinion of those who look on naturalism as a virtue in art is deserving of respect. We have been admonished for a long while that men should see things as they are, and present them as they are, and that this was the Greek way. The dictum, when applied with the meaning that men should be free from prejudice and impartial in judgment, no one would contest; but when it is proclaimed with the meaning that poets should express ideas nakedly, and should reproduce objects by portraiture, there is excuse for

raising some question. No doubt, this was in general the practice of the ancients. The Athenians were primarily intellectual, the Romans unimaginative. But by the operation of various causes — the chief of which are the importance bestowed on the individual and the impulse given to emotion by the Christian religion — mankind has changed somewhat; and therefore the methods of appeal to men, the ways of touching their hearts and enlightening their minds, have been modified. In literature this change is expressed by saying that the romantic manner has, in general, superseded the classical. The romantic manner aims at truth no less than the classical; it sets forth things as they are no less completely and clearly. The difference is rather one of methods than of aims. The classical poet usually perceives the object by his intellect, and makes his appeal to the mind; the romantic poet seizes on the object with his imagination, and makes his appeal to the heart. Not that classical work is without imagination, or romantic work devoid of intellectuality; but that in one the intellect counts for more, in the other imagination. The classical poet, having once presented ideas and objects,

leaves them to make their way; the romantic poet not only presents them, but, by awakening the feelings, predisposes the mood of the mind, makes their reception by the mind easier, wins their way for them. In classical work, consequently, success depends mainly on lucidity of understanding, clearness of vision, skill in verbal expression; in romantic work, the poet must not only possess these qualities, but must superadd, as his prime characteristic, rightness, one might better say sanity, of passion. The classical virtues are more common among authors, the romantic far more rare; and hence error in the romantic manner is more frequent, especially in dealing with ideas. But with all its liability to mistake in weak hands, romantic art, by its higher range, its fiercer intensity, especially by its greater certainty, has, in the hands of a master, a clear increase of power over classical art, and under the changed conditions of civilization its resources are not to be lightly neglected. Indeed, one who voluntarily adopts the classical manner as an exclusive mode seems to choose an instrument of less compass and melody, to prefer Greek to modern music. He sings to a secluded and narrow circle,

and loses the ear of the world. Certainly Landor made this choice, and by it he must stand.

Let us take an example from the best of Landor's work, and from that region of classical art where it is wholly competent, — the brief description of small objects: —

> "The ever-sacred cup
> Of the pure lily hath between my hands
> Felt safe, unsoiled, nor lost one grain of gold."

How completely, how distinctly, the image is given, — its form, its transparent purity, its fragile and trembling gold! How free from any other than a strictly artistic charm! And yet how different is its method of appeal from Shelley's

> "tender blue-bells, at whose birth
> The sod scarce heaved;"

from Shakespeare's

> "daffodils
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty."

Or, to select an illustration, also of Landor's best, when the image, no less objective, yields of itself an infinite suggestion: —

> "Borgia, thou once wert almost too august
> And high for adoration; now thou 'rt dust.
> All that remains of thee these plaits unfold,
> Calm hair meandering in pellucid gold."

Again, how perfect is the image, how effective the development of the third line: how the melody of the last blends with its selected epithets to place the object entire and whole before the mind; how free is the quatrain from any self-intrusion of the poet! But here, too, the method of appeal is very different from Shakespeare's, as in the lines on Yorick's skull: "Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft." The difference in mood between these two only emphasizes the difference in method. Enough has been said, however, in description and exemplification of the two kinds of art. Either is sufficient for its ends, nor would any one desire to dispense with that which has resulted in work so admirable as has been quoted from Landor. The distinctively romantic poets do not consign the classical style to disuse. In the presentation of images, Keats has frequent recourse to it, as in his picture of Autumn lying

> "on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
> Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
> Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers."

So Wordsworth, in expressing ideas, is sometimes more bald than the least imaginative of the classics. But such poets do not

employ this style alone; they are characterized by the modern manner; they give us those "sweet views" which in the ancient mode "can never well be seen." Landor droops below his great contemporaries, not by merely adopting the classical method, but by adopting it exclusively. Whether this choice was entirely free, or partly determined by natural incapacity, is doubtful. Violent and tempestuous as his nature was, with all his boyish intensity of indignation, his boyish delicacy of tenderness, he seems to possess temper rather than true passion. In the verses to his poetic love, Ianthe, there are many fine sentiments, graceful turns; there is courtliness of behavior; but the note of passion is not struck. Ianthe is only another poetic mistress of the cavalier school, and in the memory her name is less, both for dignity and pathos, than Rose Aylmer's. Without passion, of course, a poet is condemned to the classical style. Passion is the element in which the romantic writer fuses beauty and wisdom; it is the means by which personality pervades literary work with most ease, directness, and glow. In the great modern poets it is the substance of their genius. But just as neither by a phi-

losophy of life nor in any other way did Landor fill his subject with himself, so neither by passion nor by any other quality did he breathe his own spirit into his style.

The consequence is that Landor, unclassified in his own age, is now to be ranked among the poets, increasing in number, who appeal rather to the artistic than to the poetic sense. He is to be placed in that group which looks on art as a world removed; which prizes it mainly for the delight it gives; which, caring less for truth, deals chiefly with the beauty that charms the senses; and which therefore weaves poetry like tapestry, and uses the web of speech to bring out a succession of fine pictures. The watchwords of any school, whether in thought or art, seldom awake hostility until their bearing on the details of practice reveals their meaning. Art is, in a sense, a world removed from the actual and present life, and beauty is the sole title that admits any work within its limits. Of this there is no question. But that world, however far from what is peculiar to any one age, has its eternal foundations in universal life; and that beauty has its enduring power because it is the incarnation of universal life. What

poem has a better right to admission there than The Eve of St. Agnes? and in what poem does the heart of life beat more warmly? Laodamia belongs in that world, but it is because it voices abiding human feelings no less than because of its serenity. Nature in itself is savage, sterile, and void; individual life in itself is trifling: each obtains its value through its interest to humanity as a whole, and the office of art is to set forth that value. A lovely object, a noble action, are each of worth to men, but the latter is of the more worth; and, as was long ago pointed out, poetry is by the limitations of language at a considerable disadvantage in treating of formal beauty. But without developing these remarks, of which there is no need, the only point here to be made is that in so far as poetry concerns itself with objects without relation to ideas, it loses influence; in so far as it neglects emotion and thought for the purpose of gaining sensuous effects it loses worth; in both it declines from the higher to the lower levels. Landor, notwithstanding his success in presenting objects of artistic beauty — and his poetry is full of exquisite delineations of them — failed to interest men; nor could his

skill in expressing thought, although he was far more intellectual than his successors, save his reputation. Landor mistook a few of the marks of art for all. His work has the serenity, the remoteness, that characterize high art, but it lacks an intimate relation with the general life of men; it sets forth formal beauty, as painting does, but that beauty remains a sensation, and does not pass into thought. This absence of any vital relation between his art and life, between his objects and ideas, denotes his failure. There are so many poets whose works contain as perfect beauty, and in addition truth and passion; so many who instead of mirroring beauty make it the voice of life, — who instead of responding in melodious thought to the wandering winds of reverie strike their lyres in the strophe and antistrophe of continuous song, — that the world is content to let Landor go by. The guests at the famous late dinner-party to which he looked forward will indeed be very few, and they will be men of leisure.

Thus far, in examining the work of Landor as a whole, and endeavoring to understand somewhat the public indifference to it, the answer has been found in its objectivity

and its discontinuity, both springing from the effacement of his personality as an active power; or, in other words, in the fact that, by failing to link his images with his thoughts, and his thoughts one with another, so as to make them tell on the mind, and especially by eliminating the romantic element of passion, he failed to bring his work into sympathetic or helpful relations with the general emotional and intellectual life of men.

Why, then, do the most sensitive and discriminating critics, as was said at the beginning, list themselves in Landor's favor? They are, without exception, fellow-workers with him in the craft of literature. They have, by their continued eulogy of him, made it a sign of refinement to be charmed by him, a proof of unusually good taste to praise him. His admirers, by their very divergence in opinion from the crowd, seem to claim uncommon sensibilities; and the coterie is certainly one of the highest order, intellectually: Browning, Lowell, Swinburne, to name no more. They are all literary men. They are loud in their plaudits of his workmanship, but are noticeably guarded in their commendation of his entire con-

tents; the passages for which they express unstinted enthusiasm are few. Landor was, beyond doubt, a master-workman, and skill in workmanship is dear to the craft; others may feel its effects, but none appreciate it with the keen relish of the professional author. The fullness, power, and harmony of Landor's language are clearly evident in his earliest work. He had the gift of literary expression from his youth, and in his mature work it shows as careful and high cultivation as such a gift ever received from its possessor. None could give keener point and smoother polish to a short sentence; none could thread the intricacies of long and involved constructions more unerringly. He had at command all the grammatical resources of lucidity, though he did not always care to employ them. He knew all the devices of prose composition to conceal and to disclose; to bring the commonplace to issue in the unexpected; to lead up, to soften, to hesitate, to declaim; to extort all the supplementary and new suggestions of an old comparison; to frame a new and perfect simile; in short, he was thoroughly trained to his art. Yet his prose is not, by present canons, perfect prose. It is not self-possessed, sub-

dued, and graceful conversation, modulated, making its points without aggressive insistence, yet with certainty, keeping interest alive by a brilliant but natural turn and by the brief and luminous flash of truth through a perfect phrase. His prose is rather the monologue of a seer. In reading his works one feels somewhat as if sitting at the feet of Coleridge. Landor has the presence that abashes companions. His manner of speech is more dignified, more ceremonial, his enunciation is more resonant, his accent more exquisite, than belong to the man of the world. He silences his readers by the mere impossibility of interrupting with a question so noble and smooth-sliding a current of words. The style is a sort of modern Miltonic; it has the suggestion of the pulpit divine in Hooker, the touch of formal artificiality that characterizes the first good English prose. Landor goes far afield for his vocables; his page is a trifle too polysyllabic, has too much of the surface glitter of Latinity. But in the age that produced the styles of De Quincey, Ruskin, and Carlyle, it would be mere folly to find fault because Landor did not write, we will not say after the French fashion, but after the fashion of Swift, at

his highest and on his level, the unrivaled master of simple English prose. Landor, at his best, is not so picturesque as De Quincey, nor so eloquent as Ruskin, nor so intense as Carlyle; but he has more self-possession, more serenity, more artistic charm, a wider compass, a more equal harmony, than any of these.

Landor pleases his fellow-craftsmen, however, not only by this general command of language as a means of expression, but by the perfection of form in his short pieces. Perfection of form is the great feature of classical art; it is an intellectual virtue, at least in literature, and appeals to the mind. The moderns are lacking in it. Landor's command of form was limited, insufficient for the construction of a drama; impressive as Count Julian is, it has not this final excellence. Landor's power in this respect is analogous to Herrick's; it is perfect only within narrow bounds; but it lacks Herrick's spontaneity. His verses are not the "swallow flights of song;" he was not a singer. The lyric on Rose Aylmer is entirely exceptional, and much of its charm lies in the beauty of the name, the skillful repetition, and, we must add, in the memory of

Lamb's fondness for it. Familiar as it is, it would be unjust not to quote it: —

> "Ah, what avails the sceptred race!
> Ah, what the form divine!
> What every virtue, every grace!
> Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
> Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
> May weep, but never see,
> A night of memories and of sighs
> I consecrate to thee."

Ordinarily, however, Landor deals with a beautiful image or one fine sentiment. His objectivity, his discontinuity, help him here; they insure that simplicity and singleness which are necessary for success. The lack of any temptation in his mind to expound and suggest is probably one reason why he rejected the sonnet, certainly the most beautiful poetic mould to give shape to such detached thoughts and feelings. He scorned the sonnet; it was too long for him; he must be even more brief. He would present the object at once, instead of gradually, as the sonnet does; not unveiling the perfect and naked image until the last word has trembled away. His best work of this kind is in the quatrain, which is rather the moralist's than the poet's form, — Martial's, not Horace's.

"I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

This is perfect; but it is perfect speech, not perfect song. When Landor had something to say at more length, when he had a story to tell, he chose the idyl; and his work in this kind is no less perfect in form than are his quatrains. Indeed, on the idyls his poetic fame will mainly rest. They are very remote from modern life, but the best of them are very beautiful, and in the highest rank of poetry that appeals to the artistic sense. Those who are able still to hold fast to the truth of Greek mythology to the imagination will not willingly let them die. To read them is like looking at the youths and maidens of an ancient bas-relief. The cultivated will never tire of them; the people will never care for them. The limitations of their interest are inherent in their subject and the mode of its presentation; but these limitations do not lessen their beauty, although they make very small the number who appreciate it.

Landor's influence over his critics is due chiefly to his power as a stylist, and to the

perfection of form in his shorter poems and his idyls; but something is also due to the passages which, apart from those mentioned, they commend so unreservedly; such as the study of incipent insanity in the dialogue between Tiberius and Vipsania, and the scenes from Antony and Octavius where the boy Cæsarion is an actor. Not to be conquered by these argues one's self "dull of soul;" and scattered through the volumes are other passages of only less mastery, especially in the Greek dialogues, which cannot here be particularized. For this reason no author is more served than Landor by a book of selections. After all, too, an author should be judged by his best. Nevertheless, when one remembers the extraordinary gifts of Landor, one cannot but regret the defects of nature and judgment that have so seriously interfered with his influence. His work as a whole exhibits a sadder waste of genius than is the case even with Coleridge. There is no reason to suppose that the verdict of the public on his value will be reversed. His failure may well serve as a warning to the artistic school in poetry; it affords one more of the long list of illustrations of that fundamental truth in literature,—the truth that a

man's work is of service to mankind in proportion as, by expressing himself in it, by filling it with his own personality, he fills it with human interest.

CRABBE.

We have done with Crabbe. His tales have failed to interest us. Burke and his friends, as we all know, held a different opinion from ours; and their praise is not likely to have been ill founded. The cultivated taste of Holland House, thirty years later, is also against our decision. Through two generations of markedly different literary temper Crabbe pleased the men best worth pleasing. Indeed, we owe him to Burke's approval; for when Lord North, Lord Shelburne, and Lord Thurlow had neglected his entreaties for recognition and aid, and had left him to write, pawn, and go hungry, Burke saved him from the debtor's prison, took him into his friendship, welcomed him to his home, and gave him to literature.

Yet the verses which won this recognition from Burke, and gained for Crabbe, besides, praise from Johnson and talk with Fox and idle mornings in Reynolds's studio, were

only his fledgeling flights. It was not until after more than twenty years of silence, spent in the obscurity of a country clergyman's life, that he showed the richness and abundance of his vein. Then Burke and his friends had given place to those younger men, in whose lives a new age was dawning; but as warm a welcome awaited Crabbe among them as he had ever met with in Burke's club. With them he passed his old age, pleased with Byron's praise, and with the friendliness of Moore and Rogers, and with Scott's kindly regard and correspondence. They liked to see him, with his beautiful white hair, his formal, old-fashioned garb and old-school manners, the last of that long line of poets through whom the Queen Anne taste had tyrannized for a century in English verse, sitting familiarly among themselves, who were preparing the way for the next generation to ignore the traditions which Burke and Johnson had fixed in his poetic faith. Especially did Sir Walter honor him; like Fox, he chose Crabbe's poems to be read to him just before he died.

Without reckoning the approval of others, what was the strong attraction in Crabbe's work for Scott and Fox? Their judgment

was not so worthless that it can be disregarded with the complacent assurance with which the decisions of Gifford and Jeffrey are set aside; on the contrary, Scott had such health and Fox such refinement that their judgment ought to raise a doubt whether our generation is not making a mistake and missing pleasure through its neglect of Crabbe.

Crabbe is a story-teller. He describes the life he saw, — common, homely life, sometimes wretched, not infrequently criminal; the life of the country poor, with occasional light and shadow from the life of the gentlefolk above them. He had been born into it, in a village on the Suffolk coast, amid stern and cheerless natural scenes: landward, the bramble-overgrown heath encompassing crowded and mean houses; eastward, —

> "Stakes and sea-weed withering on the mud."

Here he had passed his boyhood, in the midst of human life equally barren and stricken with the ugliness of poverty, among surly and sordid fishers given to hard labor and rough brawl, —

> "A joyless, wild, amphibious race,
> With sullen woe displayed in every face," —

and the sight had been a burden to him. The desire to throw off this twofold oppression of mean nature and humanity must have counted for much in determining him on that long-remembered December day, when, as the bleak twilight came down, darkening the marshy pool on the heath where he stood, he took his resolve to go up to London and seek poetical fame; and glad at heart he must have been, that morning of early spring, when he left all this ugliness behind him, ignorant of the struggle and distress he was to meet where he was going.

In that early poem which Johnson praised Crabbe described this village life with the vigor of a youth who had escaped out of its dreary imprisonment, and without a touch of that tenderness for early associations which softened Goldsmith's retrospect of the scenes of his early days. Crabbe told of exhausting labor leading on to prematurely useless and neglected age; of storms sweeping away the shelter of the poor; of smugglers, poachers, wreckers, tavern debauchery, and, worst of all, the poor-house — a terrible picture, perhaps the best known of all his drawing — with its deserted inmates cut off from all human care except that of the heedless phy-

sician and the heartless parson; a miserable tale, but too much of it only what his own eyes had seen. We do not know the contents of those piles of manuscripts which he wrote during his twenty years of silence, and — not much to the world's loss, some think — made bonfires of to amuse his children; but his first poem after that long interval was the same story, the experience of those whose names appeared in the year's parish register of births, marriages, and deaths, and was a sorrowful survey of seduction, desertion, crime, discontent, and folly. In his later tales he dealt less in unrelieved gloom and bitter misery, and at times made a trial at humor. There are glimpses of pleasant English life and character, but these are only glimpses; the ground of his painting is shadow, — the shadow that rested on the life of the English poor in his generation.

Where else would one turn for an adequate description of that life, or gain so direct an insight into the social sources and conditions of the Methodist revival, or into the motives and convictions of reformers like Mary Wollstonecraft? Where would one obtain so keen a sense of the vast change which has taken place in the conditions of

humble human life within this century? Mr. Leslie Stephen, in that essay which is so good-humored but so unsuccessful an attempt to appreciate Crabbe, mentions the few illustrations in modern literature of the life Crabbe described; it is seen in Charlotte Brontë's Yorkshiremen, and George Eliot's millers, and in a few other characters, "but," he says, "to get a realistic picture of country life as Crabbe saw it, we must go back to Squire Western, or to some of the roughly-hewn masses of flesh who sat to Hogarth." The setting of Crabbe's tales has this special historic interest. The schools, houses, books, habits, occupations, and all the external characteristics of the tales belong to the time: the press-gang comes to carry off the lover just before his wedding-day, and leaves the bride to nurse an unfathered child, to receive the courtship of a canting and carnal preacher, and to find a refuge from him, and from the father who favors him, in suicide; orphan boys are bound over to brutal task-masters; pictures of the sects (from the pen of a respectable clergyman of the Established Church, it is true) recall the beginnings of Methodism with a vividness only to be equaled by the

books and pamphlets of the early converts' own writing. This historic value of the tales, however, great as it is to the student of manners, is secondary to their poetic value, which lies in the sentiment, feeling, and pathos with which the experience of life embodied in them, the workings of simple human nature, in however debased surroundings, is set forth. It is an experience which results usually from the interplay of low and selfish motives, and of ignoble or weak passions; it is, too often, the course of brutal appetite, thoughtless or heartless folly, avarice, sensuality, and vice, relieved too seldom by amiable character, sympathy, charity, self-sacrifice, or even by the charm of natural beauty. Yet if all the seventy tales be taken into account, they contain nearly all varieties of character and circumstance among the country poor; and, though the darker side may seem to be more frequently insisted upon, it is because the nature of his subject made it necessary, because he let his light, as Moore said, —

> "Through life's low, dark interior fall,
> Opening the whole, severely bright,"

rather than because he had any lack of cheerfulness of temper.

Crabbe does not, in a true sense, give expression to the life of the poor; he merely narrates it. Here and there, throughout the poems, are episodes written out of his own life; but usually he is concerned with the experience of other men, which he had observed, rather than with what his own heart had felt. A description of life is of course far inferior to an utterance of it, such as was given to us by Burns, who dealt with the life of the poor so much more powerfully than Crabbe; and a realistic description has less poetic value than an imaginative one, such as was given to us by Wordsworth at his best. Crabbe's description is perhaps the most nakedly realistic of any in English poetry; but it is an uncommonly good one. Realism has a narrow compass, and Crabbe's powers were confined strictly within it; but he had the best virtues of a realist. His physical vision — his sight of what presents itself to the eye — was almost perfect; he saw every object, and saw it as it was. Perhaps the minuteness with which he saw was not altogether an advantage, for he does not seem to have taken in the landscape as a whole, but only as a mosaic of separate objects. He never gives general effects of

beauty or grandeur; indeed, he seldom saw the beauty of a single object; he did little more than catalogue the things before him, and employ in writing poetry the same faculty in the same way as in pursuing his favorite studies of botany and entomology. Yet, with these limitations, what realist in painting could exceed in truthfulness and carefulness of detail this picture of a fall morning? —

"It was a fair and mild autumnal sky,
And earth's ripe treasures met th' admiring eye;
The wet and heavy grass where feet had strayed,
Not yet erect, the wanderer's way betrayed;
Showers of the night had swelled the deep'ning rill,
The morning breeze had urged the quick'ning mill;
Long yellow leaves, from osiers strewed around,
Choked the small stream and hushed the feeble sound."

Or this sketch of light in a decayed warehouse turned into a tenement for the poor? —

"That window view! oiled paper and old glass
Stain the strong rays, which, though impeded, pass,
And give a dusty warmth to that huge room,
The conquered sunshine's melancholy gloom;
When all those western rays, without so bright,
Within become a ghastly glimmering light,
As pale and faint upon the floor they fall,
Or feebly gleam on the opposing wall."

Nor is this carefulness of detail a trick, such as is sometimes employed to give the ap-

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pearance of reality to unreal human life. Crabbe's mental vision, his sight into the workings of the passions and the feelings, although not so perfect as his physical vision, was yet at its best very keen and clear; the sentiments, moods, reflections, and actions of his characters are seldom contrary to nature. It would be difficult to show a finer delineation of its kind than his description of the meeting of two long-parted brothers. As Richard approaches his brother's hall, he reflects, —

"'How shall I now my unknown way explore, —
He proud and rich, I very proud and poor?
Perhaps my friend a dubious speech mistook,
And George may meet me with a stranger's look.
How stands the case? My brother's friend and mine
Met at an inn, and set them down to dine;
When, having settled all their own affairs,
And kindly canvassed such as were not theirs,
Just as my friend was going to retire,
"Stay! you will see the brother of our squire,"
Said his companion; "be his friend, and tell
The captain that his brother loves him well,
And when he has no better thing in view
Will be rejoiced to see him. Now, adieu!"

"'Well, here I am; and, brother, take you heed,
I am not come to flatter you and feed.
You shall no soother, fawner, hearer, find;
I will not brush your coat, nor smooth your mind;
I will not hear your tales the whole day long,

Nor swear you' re right, if I believe you wrong;
I will not earn my dinner when I dine
By taking all your sentiments for mine;
Nor watch the guiding motions of your eye
Before I venture question or reply.
Yet, son of that dear mother could I meet —
But lo! the mansion, — 't is a fine old seat!'

"The brothers met, with both too much at heart
To be observant of each other's part.
'Brother, I 'm glad!' was all that George could say,
Then stretched his hand, and turned his head away;
Richard, meantime, made some attempt to speak,
Strong in his purpose, in his trial weak.
At length, affection, like a risen tide,
Stood still, and then seemed slowly to subside;
Each on the other's looks had power to dwell,
And brother brother greeted passing well."

These qualities of fine, true physical and mental vision are the essential qualities for valuable realistic work; if there be room for regret in Crabbe's share of them, it is because their range is contracted. The limitations of his physical vision have been mentioned; in respect to his mental vision Crabbe saw only a few and comparatively simple operations of human nature, — the workings of country-bred minds, not finely or complexly organized, but slow-motioned, and perplexed, if perplexed at all, not from the difficulty of the problem, but from their own dullness. Yet within these limits his

characters are often pathetic, sometimes tragic, or even terrible, in their energy of evil passion or remorse.

One other quality, without which clear mental and physical vision would be ineffective, is essential to realism like Crabbe's, — transparency, the quality by virtue of which life is seen through the text plainly and without distortion; and this is the quality which Crabbe possessed in most perfection. He not only saw the object as it was: he presented it as it was. He neither added nor took away; he did not unconsciously darken or heighten color, soften or harden line. Whatever was before his mind — the conversation of a gossip, the brutality of a ruffian, the cant of a convert — he reproduced truthfully; whatever was the character of his story, mean or tragic, trivial or pathetic, he did not modify it. There was no veil of fancy, no glamour of amiable deception or dimness of charitable tears, to obscure his view: if he found nudity and dirt, they reappeared in his work nudity and dirt still; if he found courage and patience, he dealt the same even-handed justice. His distinction is that he told a true story.

It was, perhaps, because he was thus able

to present accurately and faithfully the human life which he saw so clearly that he won such admiration from Scott; for Scott had the welcome of genius for any new glimpse of humanity, and he knew how rare, and consequently how valuable, is the gift of simple and direct narration of what one sees. Fox had great sensibility and tenderness of heart; and Crabbe presented the lot of the poor so vividly, so lucidly, so immediately, that he stirred in Fox the same feelings with which a better poet would have so charged his verses that natures not so finely endowed as Fox would have been compelled to feel them too. Scott and Fox knew what a valuable acquisition this realistic sketch of humble life in their generation was, so faithful, minute, and trustworthy; they felt that their experience was enlarged, that real humanity had been brought home to them, and in the sway of those emotions, which Crabbe did not infuse into his work, but which his work quickens in sympathetic hearts, they could forgive him his tediousness, his frequent commonplace, his not unusual absurdity of phrase, his low level of flight with its occasional feebleness of wing.

In their minds, too, his style must have

had more influence than we are apt to think, — the style of the great school which died with him, the form and versification which they had been taught to believe almost essential to the best poetry, and from a traditional respect for which they could hardly free their minds as easily as ourselves. Crabbe used the old heroic rhymed couplet, that simplest form of English verse music, which could rise, nevertheless, to the almost lyric loftiness of the last lines of the Dunciad; so supple and flexible; made for easy simile and compact metaphor; lending itself so perfectly to the sudden flash of wit or turn of humor; the natural shell of an epigram; compelling the poet to practice all the virtues of brevity; checking the wandering fancy, and repressing the secondary thought; requiring in a masterly use of it the employment of more mental powers than any other metrical form; despised and neglected now because the literature which is embodied in it is despised and neglected, yet the best metrical form which intelligence, as distinct from poetical feeling, can employ. Crabbe did not handle it in any masterful way; he was careless, and sometimes slipshod; but when he chose he could employ it

well, and should have credit for it. To take one more example from his poems, how excellently he uses it in this passage! —

> "Where is that virtue which the generous boy
> Felt, and resolved that nothing should destroy;
> He who with noble indignation glowed
> When vice had triumph; who his tear bestowed
> On injured merit? He who would possess
> Power, but to aid the children of distress!
> Who has such joy in generous actions shown,
> And so sincere they might be called his own;
> Knight, hero, patriot, martyr! on whose tongue
> And potent arm a nation's welfare hung, —
> Where now this virtue's fervor, spirit, zeal?
> Who felt so warmly, has he ceased to feel?
> Or are these feelings varied? Has the knight,
> Virtue's own champion, now refused to fight?
> Is the deliverer turned th' oppressor now?
> Has the reformer dropt the dangerous vow?
> Or has the patriot's bosom lost its heat,
> And forced him, shivering, to a snug retreat?
> Is such the grievous lapse of human pride!
> Is such the victory of the worth untried!"

Scott felt an attraction in such poetic form which we have perhaps ceased to feel; and Fox, had he lived to read it, would equally have acknowledged its power.

But Wordsworth said Crabbe was unpoetical; he condemned him for "his unpoetical mode of considering human nature and society;" and, after all, the world has agreed with Wordsworth, and disagreed with Scott

and Fox. Wordsworth told Scott an anecdote in illustration of his meaning. Sir George Beaumont, sitting with himself and Crabbe one day, blew out the candle which he had used in sealing a letter. Sir George and Wordsworth, with proper taste, sat watching the smoke rise from the wick in beautiful curves; but Crabbe seeing — or rather smelling — the object, and not seeing the beauty of it, put on the extinguisher. Therefore, said Wordsworth, Crabbe is unpoetical, — as fine a bit of æsthetic priggishness as is often met with. Scott's opinion was not much affected by the anecdote, and Wordsworth was on the wrong track. It is true, however, that Crabbe was unpoetical in Wordsworth's sense. Crabbe had no imaginative vision, — no such vision as is shown in that stormy landscape of Shelley's, in the opening of The Revolt of Islam, which lacks the truth of actuality, but possesses the higher imaginative truth, like Turner's painting, or that shown in that other storm in Pippa Passes. Crabbe saw sword-grass and saltwort and fen, but he had no secret of the imagination by which he could mingle them into harmonious beauty; there is loveliness in a salt marsh, but Crabbe could

not present it, nor even see it for himself. As in landscape so in life. Goldsmith was untrue to the actual Auburn, but he was faithful to a far more precious truth, the truth of remembered childhood, and he revealed with the utmost beauty the effect of the subtlest working of the spirit of man on practical fact; it is his fidelity to this psychological and spiritual truth which makes Auburn the "loveliest village of the plain." Crabbe exhibited nothing of this imaginative transformation of the familiar and the commonplace, perhaps saw nothing of it; he described the fishing village of Aldborough as any one with good powers of perception, who took the trouble, might see it. Through these defects of his powers he loses in poetic value; his poetry is, as he called it, poetry without an atmosphere; it is a reflection, almost mirror-like, of plain fact.

Men go to poetry too often with a preconceived notion of what the poet ought to give, instead of with open minds for whatever he has to give. Too much is not to be expected from Crabbe. He was only a simple country clergyman, half educated, with no burning ideals, no reveries, no passionate dreams; his mind did not rise out of

the capabilities and virtues of respectability. His life was as little poetical, in Wordsworth's sense, as his poetry. Yet his gift was not an empty one. Moore, Scott, and Byron were story-tellers who were poetical, in Wordsworth's sense: but is Crabbe's true description of humble life less valuable than Scott's romantic tradition, or Moore's melting, sensuous Oriental dream, or Byron's sentimental, falsely-heroic adventure? Has it not another value, because there is more of the human heart in it; because it contains actual suffering and joy of fellow-men; because it is humanity, and calls for hospitality in our sympathies and charities? Unpoetical? Yes; but it is something to have real life brought home to our tears and laughter, although it be presented barely, and the poet has trusted to the rightness and tenderness of our hearts for those feelings the absence of which in his verse led Wordsworth to call these tales unpoetical. But it is only when Crabbe is at his best that his verse has this extraordinary power.

CHARLES LAMB; OR ELIA.

Charles Lamb really came into this world of man under the name of Elia; as a "son of memory," so was he christened, and by it he is known, for it is the name, not of his creature-life, but of his better part. His personality finds expression in it, freed from the sad or mean accidents of his mortal career; and it recalls only what in him was touched with the light and shadow of an inconstant genius or penetrated with the simplicity of the heart, and yet leaves room for that eccentricity, that strangeness heightened to the point of quaintness, which is an element in the attractiveness of character not less than, as Bacon declared, in beautiful things. Elia is a name of the imagination; but it was borne by an old acquaintance, an Italian who was a fellow-clerk at the South-Sea House when Lamb was a boy there, thirty years before he sat down to write these Essays; and, as a piece of pleasantry, he borrowed his friend's true face to mask his

own. He went, he tells us, to see the Elia of flesh and blood, and laugh over the liberty he had taken, but found the Italian dead; and the incident — the playfulness of the odd plagiarism ending unexpectedly in a solemn moment, a pathetic close — is so in character with the moods of these pages, that even their maker could not have invented better what life gave into his hands. The name had devolved upon him now, he said; he had, as it were, unknowingly adopted a shade, and it was to go about with him thenceforth, and watch at his grave after he too should depart. For two years he used the ruse of this ghost of a name, but the uncanniness of it was his own secret; to the reader of the *London Magazine*, in which he published, Elia was — what it is to us — a name of the eternal humorist in life's various crowd.

The form which Lamb chose for himself, the familiar essay as it had been developed in England, was as well fitted to him as his natural voice. He had begun as a poet, but he lacked the condensation, the directness and singleness of intellectual aim, the power of control, which are es-

sential to the poet; he was an observer of the world without, a rambler in all things, and tended inevitably to that dissipation of the eye among the multitude of men and things, which ends in prose; even as a humorist he loses himself in his impressions, and becomes reportorial. But he had an eye for oddities, and with it went the saving grace that he loved the absurd in man. The spirit of caricature was not in him. He lived in a nation marked by freedom of caprice, and in its chief city; but it is seldom that he chooses his subject from among those whose eccentricity is self-assertive; the absurdities that amuse him are those of nature's making, —"the fool" whom he loves; and the peculiarities that arrest him are oftenest those which result from the misfortunes, the rubs and dents, all the rude buffeting of life leaving its marks on the form and mind of those who are submitted to its rule. How frequently his characters are the broken "hulks" of the voyage! in what author is old age so dreary, or the boon companion so shabby! for Lamb's humor seldom ends in the laughable, but is a plea for toleration, sympathy, forgive-

ness, — the old phrase of the prayer-book, *miserable sinners are we all*, but, principally, small sinners in small things. I cannot free myself from the feeling that, as a humorist, Lamb is the father-confessor of venial offences, tender to waifs and cripples, the refuge of the victims of mean misery. It is as if the Good Samaritan should turn humorist. Yet he leaves an impression that is ill-rendered by such a description, because he blends so many strands of human nature with this main thread.

The charm of these Essays is personal, and it is made a mastering one by the autobiography they contain. Lamb was not less an egotist than a humorist, and in the familiar essay egotism has unimpeded way. He discloses his tastes and habits, and disguises not those things in which he differs from conventional man; he is proud of them, and goes his own pace. There is infinite amusement in a certain kind of self-gossip, seen to its perfection in Pepys; and though Lamb's likings in meat and drink are not to be confounded with things of the Pepysian order, yet the tone is sometimes not to be

discriminated from such "pure idleness." The sinister reflection of how much social hypocrisy saves from, of what concessions of individual preference or even conviction are made to the company, reacts in us and heightens the enjoyment when an egotist stands to his egotism and is unabashed though pilloried in men's minds. Frankness is always engaging, and Lamb wins us by his confidingness. He gives more than this sense of intimacy; he does really surrender himself, and all his relatives besides, into our hands. At the time he had the grace to conceal, by appearances, the characters he drew; but the veil was thin, and nothing is now left of it. His strong domestic feeling, his love for the things of home, enhance the humanity of the portrayal, and each picture is seen beyond the contrasting foreground of "the lonely hearth" where he sits writing; "the old familiar faces" are illumined there, in the later years, with as tender a melancholy as in the poem of his youth. Scenes from his own life make up no small portion of what is substantial in his book; and the humor is always softened by the atmosphere of mingled affection and sen-

timent in which it works. His confessions of childhood are especially touching. No one has revealed the poignancy of children's sufferings, their helplessness, their solitariness, their hopelessness, the physical nearness of all grief at that age, with a pen so crying out shame. But, as in his description of middle and elderly life there is a predominant strain of misery and triviality, a never-absent pathos, so in what he draws from childhood, where are the cheerfulness, the innocence, the gayety, the wild and thoughtless happiness? They were not in his life. Even his child-angel is a sorrowful conception. When he was "at Christ's" — was it such a child's hell? and was that all he knew of childhood? One cannot help such reflections; and they underlie, in truth, the melancholy that attended him and the sentiment that sprang up in him, both of which preserve these Essays equally with their humor.

Sentiment stood for him, perhaps, in the place of love in his life. The romance, which now is the memory of "Alice W——," certainly was cherished, in the sphere of sentiment, by him life-long; and

in his musings in imagination upon what might have been, there is much of that mournful fancy, that affection for things unrealized, which betray heart-hunger; even in his attachment to old places and accustomed ways, and to what he called "antiquity" (of which in his own mind he and his belongings were part and parcel), there is something of the wandering of the else-unsupported vine. His is the sentiment of a melancholy, a suppressed, down-borne, and retarded nature, cabined, cribbed, confined. It was almost his sole good fortune that literature offered him a resource from the deprivations of his life, and gave him freedom of thought and feeling in the ideal world; there he found objects worth his constancy, and being gifted with sensibility and discernment, he became a discoverer in "the realms of gold," an antiquarian whose prizes were lyrics and sonnets and snatches of song,

> "And beauty making beautiful old rhyme;"

and he forsook the modern days to delight himself with the curious felicity of the Arcadia and Sir Thomas Browne, with single great scenes of the Elizabethans,

and with the breath of Marvell's garden. He escaped into the golden age, into "antiquity," — for he meant by that favorite phrase little that was older than Sackville.

It is easy to overestimate the service of Lamb and his friends in the revival of the older English literature. It was not begun by them. Throughout the eighteenth century the rill of Parnassus had been flowing, and now the stream had become broad. Lamb's group was borne on a deeper common current. But he, with Coleridge, Hazlitt, Hunt, and others of the time were agents in the diffusion of the new taste, and their critical appreciation and authority gave them a place as supporters of the innovation, sufficient to define a historical moment. Lamb is not to be regarded as the author of the revival of which he was rather a part. He felt it more than he directed it. Leadership was not in his bundle of qualities. He responded, however, to the influences of the re-discovered literature with marvelously perfect sympathy. The more recondite and esoteric portions of it were most to his taste. The humorist in him answered the most exigent demands of the occasion;

and oddities of language and thought, conceits, quaintnesses, even conscious affectations, attracted him, just as the same qualities in living human nature called forth his motley-seeking wits. His originality, or native eccentricity, felt something kindred to itself in the old writers; their queernesses, worn like nature, kept his own in countenance; their affectations were a model on which his innate whimsicality could frame itself. And, possibly, more than all (yet excepting the pure charm of poetry), their sentiment, lingering on from days of chivalry and the allegorical in literature, fed a fundamental need of the emotional nature in such a life as Lamb's, perforce, was. He became an imitator of antiquated style, a mannerist after his favorites, given to artifice and fantasy as a literary method, and yet he remained himself. The disease of language does not penetrate to the thought.

Thus there were mingled in Lamb literary artifice with truth to nature, egotism with humanity, humor with sentiment, — both dashed by something melancholy; and one spark of genius, fusing this blend, has made the book of Elia a treasure to

many. It is not a great book, but it is uncommonly interesting. It is human from cover to cover. The subjects may be trivial, the company "low," the incidents farcical; but of such is the kingdom of this world, — at least it was so in London then. Lamb was a good observer; and, as in the sketches of the earlier essayists of Queen Anne literary historians point out the beginnings of the social novel of the next generation in that century, may not one find a foregleam of Dickens in these pages, of the lot of children, and the look of lives grown threadbare, and the virtues hidden in commonplace people? There is, no doubt, the trace of Smollett; but in addition is there not the spirit of humanity which took possession of our fiction and subdued it to democracy? The exaggeration, both of humor and of sentiment, in Dickens, the master of the craft, Lamb was free from; but the curious tracer of literary moods in the century would hardly hesitate to include Lamb in the succession. On other sides Lamb faced the past; but here was his one window on the times he lived in, or else he must be set down as one of those "sports" of the intellect

which have no relation to their generation. In description and in character-drawing he was, of course, as simply personal as in his criticism. He might have smiled or scoffed at the idea that he was a forerunner in fiction as that he was a leader in the romantic movement. He cared nought for such things, as little as for science or music. He worked as an individual only, and told his recollections or described his friends and acquaintances just as he read his folios, because he pleased himself in doing it. But it is hard for a writer, however idiosyncratic, not to be a link between the days. The taste that classes him, in his work as a humorist, is his love of Hogarth, whom he appreciated more intelligently and fully, perhaps, than any one between Fielding and Thackeray. When it is objected that the quality of ordinary life as he presents it is "seaminess," we should recall in what company he exhibits it; and if his humor does not always hide the deformity and avoid the pain of the spectacle, our generation is probably more acutely aware of these things.

The human interest in the Essays, how-

ever, is not confined to what Lamb saw of the absurd and grotesque, the cruel and pathetic, in other lives. He is himself his best character, and best drawn. He was extraordinary self-conscious, and the pages yield little that he did not mean to be told. One must go to the silent part of his biography to obtain that sobering correction of his whimsies and failings, that knowledge of his manliness in meeting the necessities of his situation, that sense of honesty, industry, and generosity, which he kept out of his books. The side that most men turn to the world he concealed, and he showed that which is commonly kept secret. He had been a poet in youth, and he never lost the habit of wearing his heart upon his sleeve. He was never as a poet to get beyond sentiment, which in a romantic age is but a little way; and in degenerating into prose (as he thought it) he gave no other sign of poetic endowment than this of sentiment that he could not surrender; but to what a length he carried it without exceeding the bounds of true feeling! Sentiment, like humor, needs a delicate craft; but he, though not so penetrating, was as sure of hand as Burns.

Even under the temptation of an antique style, he does not err: with affectation commanding every turn and cadence, his feeling goes true; and the heart answers to it through all the gamut, playful, regretful, melancholy, wailing. The word is not too strong; turn to The Dream-Children, — it is the tragedy of sentiment. Other moods too he revealed, and especially the melancholy ground of his nature. He disclaimed the fierce earnestness, the bitter experience, the hopeless despondency of The Confessions of a Drunkard, nor should one charge him with the burden of so dark a tale; but that there are elements of autobiography in it, of things foreseen if not experienced, — a vision of the road to its end, — is, unhappily, too plain a matter. I refer to it, not to reproach or extenuate, but as one sign of several which indicate that, like all natures lacking in the principle of reason and control, Lamb was subject to spells of penitence, of bewildered appeal, which were at the roots of that insistent melancholy, and help to explain why, when it comes upon the page, it is never imaginative, but always real.

Yet Lamb, though always, I think, a pathetic figure in men's memories, does not in these Essays give such an impression except at moments, just as he affects us only at intervals with the dreariness of the human life he describes. One reason is that his personality is diffused in varying essays, and is given completely in none; and besides, his reputation as a wit, and what we know of his suppers, and the whole social side of the man, blend with the mode of address, the familiarity, the discursive manner, the frequent whim, the anecdotage, the multifarious interest of the whole. The Essays are pleasant to read, and winning; the predominant, and at first almost engrossing impression is of the companionableness of the writer, — he is excellent company. The style, too, is fitted to secure its effects. We know that he wrote them with great care, and sometimes with difficulty; and if the heart of Lamb is always close at hand in the page, his mind is there too. In some of the critical parts especially, there is that kind of reflection which gives substance to a book otherwise meant simply for entertainment. The dramatic sketches also lighten the

whole effect by their apparent impersonality. It is only when the more famous papers are thought of by themselves, and those most autobiographical in matter, that Lamb's humor and sentiment, his egotism and humanity, his literary artifice in all, and the narrow limits within which these had their field, become so prominent as to seem to constitute the book as well as the man. These qualities have established the Essays in literature, and their author, Elia, in the affections of kind hearts.

THE POETRY OF AUBREY DE VERE.

THE qualities of Aubrey de Vere's poetry are not far to seek. Lyrical in verse, strong in style, mainly historical in theme, heroic or spiritual in substance, above all placid, it stirs and tranquilizes the soul in the presence of lovely scenes, high actions, and those

"Great ideas that man was born to learn;"

and its outlook is upon the field of the soul regenerate, where suffering is remembered only through its purification, blessed in issues of sweetness, dignity, and peace. It takes wide range, but is predominantly either Bardic or Christian. The sympathy of the poet with the ancient Irish spirit must have been fed with patriotic fervor, akin to renewed inspiration, to permit him to render the old lays of his country with such fidelity to their native genius. Cuchullain once more becomes credible to fancy, — the imagination of a

childhood world; and the songs of Oiseen and Ethell strike with a music as of anvils. The versions of the three monuments of old Irish story — the Sorrows of Song — are our best. The English lines have the definiteness and precision that belong to primitive narrative; and yet each tale is involved in that atmosphere of "the shore of old romance," of the marvelous, the picturesque, the childlike, which appeals to our eyes like the distances of spring — the haze of time lying along the early world. In each of the three mythic poems there are pictures of novel and strange beauty: the boy, Cuchullain, riding laughing home in his car after the deeds of his knighting-day, with the leashed wide-winged birds flying over him, the six leashed stags following the chariot captive, the bandits' heads upon its front; or, the lovers, Naisi and Deirdré, hand in hand on the foot-bridge pouring forth the lay that hemmed them with the clansmen of Usnach; or, King Lir, "with under-sliding arms," by the bed of the gold-woven bridal veil, lifting the children from its dawn-touched glittering tissue to "the first light from the sky."

These are such pictures as Burne-Jones is too often thought to have invented.

Of all, Cuchullain is the noblest figure in this old Irish verse; and the poem which relates his deeds — with its episodic tales of his youth, the background of his island-boyhood with the friend he was doomed to slay, and the long duel between them which closes in his lament over the dead man he loved and his retirement to the forest — is so inwrought with bravery, pathos, and emotional beauty as to give it the first place, while the hero's Achillean return to the host places it among true epics. The second of the three Sorrows — The Sons of Usnach — is characterized by a strange processional beauty, as of a pageant pilgriming, and by a clear spirit of joyfulness in the midst of the moving cloud of fate, like "the tempest's heart of calm." But the last — The Children of Lir — touches the heart most deeply. The idea of the poem — the first human effort to extend the bounds of Divine Mercy, to reach through the "dark backward and abysm" of the thousand pagan years, and gather to its fold these children to be the first-fruits

of Christ in their land — is very noble; but great as is the idea, it is subdued into a simple idyl of childhood. The poem is, indeed, unique, and the handling (Tennyson treated it less admirably) is exquisite. The children in their home are dear, and in their transformation into swans there is no discord. The swan-nature, already half-human in poetic tradition, blends of itself with the ideal image of childhood; and the nearness of the little exiles to humanity, after their change, is sustained by their mystical night-long singing overheard by men, and by the tale told their poet listening solitary by the sea in the sixth century of their woe. In their life with nature, too, a new aspect sympathetic with childhood emerges; and lastly, though lost, they still live in a world of their own, as children do. This beautiful tradition of the Irish race must become a part of the child-literature of our language.

The Christian element in this last story prepares the way for the poet's more voluminous and distinctly religious work — and it is with poets of religion that he is to be classed — in which he selects his themes from the saintly legends of the

Church, and shows the abundance and power of that life, idealized in holy tradition, which converted the nations and revivified the world. The Reformation was a source of great mortality in literature; and the loss which Protestantism sustained in surrendering the Catholic centuries, with their long record of this ideal life among mankind, was a spiritual deprivation to the northern imagination, which the noble lives of three later centuries have not yet made good. So complete is the gap now, that the times of which these poems reflect the imaginative beauty have the remoteness of a golden age, and in reading the verse a sense of dreaminess invades the mind. This portion of the poet's work makes its mass; and its interest, though various, is so even that one could as easily divide the summer landscape as choose and pick amid its beauty. The subjects are, in the main, from Irish, English, or Roman traditions of the early Church. The tales of St. Patrick, which illustrate the conversion of Ireland, are roughened by the old Bardic strength overcome by the new gospel, and masculine vigor is thus infused into

it, while a poetic continuity with the primitive lays is preserved. Aengus is a representative instance of these legends of the Christian dawn, but milder than the most. The tales of Saxon times, which illustrate the conversion of England, are almost pastoral in tone; and again, St. Cuthbert's Pentecost, is, like Aengus, only a solitary example. Others of this series, are shown with fine imaginative effects, like that of the lonely Julian Tower casting the shadow of Rome on the consecration of Westminster Abbey: —

> "On Saxon feasts she fixed a cold gray gaze;
> 'Mid Christian hymns heard but the old acclaim —
> 'Consul Romanus';"

or, with eloquent lines, like those on the Primates of Canterbury: —

> "From their fronts,
> Stubborned with marble from St. Peter's Rock,
> The sunrise of far centuries forth shall flame;"

or, with passages of brief pathos, like Bede's words: —

> "Poor youth! that love which walks in narrow ways
> Is tragic love, be sure."

The poem, devoted to Cædmon, is espe-

cially rich in such felicities both of image and phrase.

So these Christian poems succeed one another, as the poet's memory wanders back to the legends of the Empire on the first establishment of the faith in Roman lands and along Asian shores, or moves through mediæval times with Joan of Arc and episodes of the Cid that recall Cuchullain in their light-hearted performance of natural deeds, now under the Cross. The beauty of these separate stories is equable and full of a softened charm; but in them, too, as in the Bardic myths, there abides that distance of time, which makes them remote, as if they were not of our own. They are highly pictorial; and in reading them, each secluded in that silent, old-world air that encompasses it, one feels that here is a modern poet, like those early painters of pious heart who spent their lives in picturing scenes from the life of Christ; and one recalls, perhaps, some Convent of San Marco where each monastic cell bears on its quiet walls such scenes from the shining hand of the Florentine on whose face fell heaven's mildest light. These poems of Aubrey de Vere — to char-

acterize them largely — are scenes from the life of Christ in Man; and there is something in them — in their gladness, their luminousness, their peace — which suggests Fra Angelico, the halo of Christian art.

Yet one reads to little purpose, if he does not discern also an intellectual element, constant in the poet's work, which gives it mental as well as spiritual character. It is not so much thought, as comprehension, which his poetry most evinces: that comprehension which is the genius of the historian and grasps the governing principles, follows the essential ideas, watches the doubtful issues of the inward world of conviction and illusion, of which alone the fate is significant. This philosophic interest in history is most directly expressed in his two dramas, Alexander the Great and St. Thomas of Canterbury, where social movements, so irresistible as to be rightly called providential principles, were centred in great personalities. In these, his eye sees, not the men merely, but ideas greater than they, of which, indeed, they were servants; and this is true, also, of such single por-

traits as Odin, Constantine, and Hildebrand. His prefaces disclose a similar distinctly historical aim in his tales, but their character as particular narratives renders it less obvious; the poetical element in them absorbs and conceals the didactic purpose. He has also occasionally inwoven in his verse more abstract and purely logical argument, of which The Death of Copernicus is an example. His sonnets and odes show, in addition, occupation with political and other modern questions. In his single contemporary Irish tale, The Sisters — a tale which makes one regret so complete an absorption of his narrative power in other lines — the criticism upon Ireland's history has both edge and weight, and its conversational temper is charming. Together with the gaunt reality of The Year of Sorrow, this story of the actual reveals the heart of a patriot, near to his living land. Indeed, in whatever division of his verse he approaches the subject of Ireland, his style gathers fire, and often, as must be the case, deepens into melancholy passion. This is shown most characteristically in the ideal conception of Ireland,

which he sometimes suggests, as a Sacrificial Nation, whose lot is to show forth spiritual virtues under perpetual earthly misfortune, and it is natural to such a mind; but there is difficulty even in its poetical acceptance, so heavy is the weight of a nation's burden. It is a great conception, but it is not a political idea. It is the young Richard's refuge — "that sweet way I was in to despair." But throughout the entire range of national and religious themes which in a long lifetime the poet has touched, one recognizes a conscientious and keen thoughtfulness as well as the other qualities of warmth, imagination, and delight in natural and moral beauty which are more upon the surface of the verse; and to miss this reflective temperament would be to lose sight of much of the inward significance of these longer poems.

Of shorter pieces he has written few in comparison with the body of his work. For one who belongs to the generation of Tennyson and was the youthful friend of Wordsworth, the impersonality of his verse is marked. He paid the tribute to Love, which is required of the gentle heart, in

a few musical lyrics, usually with the sad cadence; he paid also his tribute to human liberty and the general hope of man in some fervid sonnets that spoke from the breast; and, lastly, he paid his tribute to his friends — for he was rich in friendships — laying his loyal laurel upon each remembered grave. Finally — to compress much miscellaneous verse into small space — in Antar and Zara he treated a difficult theme of love with a delicacy and truth of feeling and a melodic power that justified its inscription to Tennyson; in many odes and sonnets he exhibited the love of nature, the sentiment for landscape and its living creatures, and the sense of the moral power of the external world, which became a true disciple of Wordsworth and continuer of his tradition; and in The Search after Proserpine, and elsewhere, he is a neighbor to Shelley. In all this portion of his work, which is more nearly related to his own century, except at rare moments he remains impersonal, and deals with ideas through images, in accordance with the great tradition of poetry from the first, for their own and not for the poet's sake.

Such, in general, is the poet's work. But it possesses some qualities which so highly distinguish it in modern verse and give it peculiar character beyond what has been indicated, that a word more must be said. One constant element is its praise of the life of the lowly, in the old Christian sense, as the soil of many virtues, and those the noblest and most endearing. The affinities of his subject-matter, both on the national and the religious side, make this natural; but its source is rather in a true sympathy with lowly lives and knowledge of them, whether among the poor by fate or those who have renounced by choice the things of fortune; and the ground of this praise — and this is the significant matter — is one that was old when Rousseau was born. So Truth comes into her own again. A second distinguishing element in the verse, as a whole, is its praise of devotion, that loyal surrender to a man or a cause which is one of the ideal passions of Love, and the vital triumph of the soul. To realize what is denoted by this characteristic, and how sharply it severs old and new, needs only a thought of the quite different way in which — to take the main

instance — Tennyson presents this virtue, in his greatest poem of man's life — how maimed and impotent in Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot, how doomed to tragic failure in the lesser persons, for Galahad's career is magical, not human; and the fact that this enfeebling of the principle of devotion is not a trait that, in Tennyson, most strikes a modern reader, measures the distance between the moral ideals that are and those that were. In this, also, Aubrey de Vere returns to the ancient fountains. A third such element in the verse is its purity, which is due, in part, to the fact that the poet is fond of youth, and fills his poems with many fair figures, fresh and ardent and beautiful, and touches with especial delicacy the tenderness of childhood and the grace of boyhood, so that there is a morning air in his world; but something is also due to his own limpid sincerity and the clarifying power of that spirit which can but represent virtue, however suffering, as joyful. His heroes are always glad. And lastly, to bring these remarks to an end, faith is an element in this verse, not to be passed over in silence. It is faith of the

sort not to be rivaled among our poets by any other than Shelley, — faith in the power of truth to subdue mankind to goodness. What to Shelley was dream and vision is here that golden age of the triumph of Christ over the heathen world, when whole nations heard and were baptized. That this is not fanciful paradox a single passage will show, and it affords a striking and useful literary parallel: —

"They slept not, on the loud-resounding shore
In glory roaming. Many a feud that night
Perished; and vengeful vows, now mockery made,
Lay quenched in their own shame. Far shone the fires
Crowning dark hills with gladness; soared the song;
And heralds sped from coast to coast to tell
How He the Lord of all, no Power Unknown,
But like a man rejoicing in his house,
Ruled the glad earth. . . .
With earliest red of dawn
Northward once more the wingèd war-ships rushed,
Swift as of old to that long hated shore —
Not now with ax and torch. His Name they bare
Who linked in one the nations."

This is the feast, the chant, the flame of Laon and Cythna. In this faith, again, there is the fundamental Christian quality, that older spirit, of which the other elements that have just been mentioned are

also branches. Thus, in all this poetry, however its phases be successively turned to the eye, or itself be inwardly searched, there is one light and one breath — the light of the Spirit and the breath thereof. It cannot but have a peculiar, though in its own century almost an exotic, charm. Joy and peace, the first Christian message, spread abroad with its music; and, heard or unheard, the song of the poet speeds that old evangel.

AUBREY DE VERE ON POETRY.

It is rare good fortune to find criticism in which the ideas are more excellent than the manner, and the spirit finer than the ideas; in which it is not the keener sympathy of the poet that speaks, or the sure sense of the trained artist for expression, or any single faculty, but the whole nature of the man; in which the judgment rendered does not proceed from any particular part of his mind — the scholarly or moral or æsthetic element by itself — but is felt to be grounded upon his total convictions. Aubrey de Vere's essays, therefore, are worth more than ordinary attention. He writes principally of Spenser and Wordsworth, and also of Milton, Shelley, and Keats. He considers mainly the doctrine of this poetry. He values it chiefly for its highest office as a teacher of moral wisdom, and a quickener of the spiritual part of our nature. He justly decides that its real subject is man's life; this is the centre of interest in all great

thought, and the rest is but ornament and episode. He is a Christian idealist, and he refuses to regard poetry except in the light of those great ideas which belong to the spirit, and, being nobly and beautifully interpreted, are the substance of the poets who live by their wisdom as well as by charm. The ethical, the philosophical element in a large sense, is to him the engrossing thing; and criticism of this sort, so incited and so aimed, has a reality that does not fall far short of the worth of direct reflection upon the things of the mind, though it deals with them through the medium of literature instead of in life itself.

With Spenser, naturally, he has many affinities. The mediævalism, the sentiment of chivalry, the allegorizing spirit, and not less the Puritan elevation of the first of the Elizabethan poets, exercise a special fascination over a Catholic mind for whom the Ages of Faith, as he likes to call them, have in a peculiar degree the ideality that clothes the past. One no longer looks for original criticism of the father of English verse, who, more than Chaucer, may claim the paternity of great poets in later days; but to remind us of his excellence has become, in

the lapse of time and the decline of poetic taste, almost as desirable an office as it once was to unfold its secret. Spenser is a poet who requires no common critic to speak justly of him. His position was a unique one, and by some infelicity of his stars he failed to rise to the greatness which seems to have been possible to him. Aubrey de Vere remarks that the great romantic poem of the Middle Ages, one that should sum them up on the human as Dante did upon the divine side, was never written ; and, looking back, it appears to us that Spenser was the choice spirit that missed this destiny. His pure poetic quality, that sensibility to beauty and delight in it as in his element, was perfect to such a degree that Milton and Keats, who possessed it in something of the same measure, seem almost to have derived it from him, whose poems nourished it in them. The sweetness and noble ease of his expression reveal the presence of a marvelous literary faculty. His responsiveness to the historical and legendary elements in the past, his power of abstracting and idealizing them for poetic use, and his profound interest in human life, were great endowments, and he possessed in a high degree and a pure form

that moral reason which is the attribute of genius. But by defects as striking as this gift he made his poem less than we fondly think it might have been. The Elizabethan prolixity, the obscure perception of the nature of form in literary work, the artificiality incident to the allegorizing temperament, account for much of what he lost; but, for all that, his poems are marvels of the creative intellect, and it is this intellect that Aubrey de Vere dwells on. Any one can point out Spenser's loveliness, but the great spirit that brooded over his verse is not so easily realized. His aim was "to strengthen man by his own mind," and it is this effort which the critic analyzes, and by so doing tries to show how well he deserved the epithet "grave" as well as "gentle Spenser."

His work, with its intricate allegory, its machinery of faëryland and chivalry, its ideal landscape, is regarded as remote from life; but just as the creations of art, which also have this unreality, are yet the expression, oftentimes, of the most real human feeling and the most substantial thought of the mind, so the figures of his embroidered poem compose a procession of true life. They are conceived and used in accordance

with a comprehensive doctrine of the nature of humanity, which Spenser undoubtedly meant to enforce through the medium of the imagination; this doctrine, in fact, is the stuff they are made of.

It is not an easy thing to resolve into its moral elements the creations of a poet who blends many strains of truth. His method is not the consecutive process of logical reflection and explication, but the simultaneous embodiment of what, however arrived at, he presents as intuitive, needing only to be seen, to be acknowledged. In the analysis, the distinctive poetic quality is too apt to be dissipated, and the poet is forgotten in the philosopher. Certain broad aspects may be easily made out. Chivalry, with its crowd of faëry knights, certainly rests, in Spenser's great work, upon the old conception of the Christian life as one militant against the enemies of the soul in the world; and quite as clearly he also represents this life as being, within the breast, ideal peace. Peace within and war without: these are two root-ideas out of which the poem flowers on its great double branches. He teaches specifically how to attain self-control, and how to meet attacks from without; or rather how

to seek those many forms of error which do mischief in the world, and to overcome them for the world's welfare. This is a bald statement, but it indicates well enough in what way Spenser employed the knightly ideal of succor on the one hand, and the Christian ideal of moral perfection on the other, in order to make a poem which should instruct as well as delight the world. He himself asserts that his aim was so lofty, and to a man such as he was a lower aim, a merely artistic purpose, would have been impossible. It is fortunate that he was not less endowed with the sense of loveliness than with a serious mind; for he thus illustrates not only the possible union of the two principal aims of poetry in all times, but also the truth that to a man whose perception of beauty is most perfect the beauty of holiness is the more impressive and authoritative in its commands. Aubrey de Vere devotes himself especially to the declaration and the proof that Spenser's poetic character was essentially that of a man deeply interested in human life, and he tries to prevent the poet's severely ideal, and sometimes fantastic, method from obscuring, as for many minds it does, the real nature of that alle-

gory, so marvelous for invention, eloquence, and perpetual charm of style, which is seldom thought to be more than an intricate and lovely legend of the imagination. The critic is not blind to the great defects of the work, — and no poem of equal rank has more, — nor does he neglect the excellences that are obvious to the least thoughtful reader; but he succeeds in placing before us its intellectual and moral substance.

In doing this he reveals his own theory of poetry, and it is one that derives its philosophy from the great historic works of our literature, and is grounded on the practice of the English masters whose fame is secure. Its cardinal principle is that man is the only object of interest to man, all else being subordinate, and valuable only for its relations to this main theme; and more particularly this subject is the spiritual life, not the material manifestations of his energies in deeds apart from their meaning. The Italian masters of Spenser too often lost themselves in incident, in romance, in story for its own sake; they were destitute of that ethical spirit which insists on planting in the deeds their significance, and regarding this as an integral, and indeed the only immortal, part

of the action. The laws of life, not the chances of individuals, were Spenser's subject, and in this he differs from Ariosto, and leaves his company. Spenser's genius was thus abstract and contemplative, and Platonic in the sense that he used images always with some reference to the general truths that transcend imagination, and are directly apprehended only intellectually. Allegory was therefore his necessary method. Spenser never succeeded in harmonizing the disparate elements of the material to which he fell heir by literary tradition; and besides the inconsistencies and incoherencies of the Renaissance culture, which never reached any unity in its own time, there were also special disturbances in his intellectual life because of the political and religious conflicts in England itself, from entanglement with which he was not free; and, moreover, he does not seem to have subdued the philosophical and poetic impulses of his own nature to any true accord. His poem, therefore, did not take on that perfection, that identity of purpose and execution, which would have placed it in the first rank, and he remains below the supreme poets of the world. The study of his work, as an illus-

tration of the conditions and art of poetry, is most instructive. Its defects teach more than its excellence, but they do not disturb the theory which Aubrey de Vere sets forth; and he would be but a blind critic who should easily argue that Spenser succeeded when he obeyed the pure artistic impulse, and failed because of the interference of his graver genius with the poetical mind, his thought with his sensibility.

Aubrey de Vere's contemplative mind, his strong hold on the abstract rather than on the concrete, help him over the poetically dry places in Spenser, and serve him even better in the case of Wordsworth. This is choosing the better of two alternatives; for, if the landscape of Arcady is incomplete for him unless there is some "swan-flight of Platonic ideas" over it, such as he says is always in Spenser's sky, he has an appreciation for beauty as steadfastly as for the higher truths of life, and it is better to suffer with deficiencies in poetic art for the sake of the matter than to be content with art alone.

The great difference between Wordsworth and Spenser is, that Spenser was concerned with the moral virtues and man's acquirement of them, while Wordsworth was more

narrowly limited to the influence of nature in forming the soul. Both looked to the same end, — spiritual life; but Wordsworth had a different starting-point. His mind was more individual, and he assumed that his own history was typical; he was less rich in the stores of antiquity, and he had less sensibility to beauty in its ideal forms; but he knew the place that nature held in his own development, and he became specifically the poet of nature, not only as beauty visible to the eye, but also, and mainly, as an invisible influence in the lives of men. Much of his verse was a pastoral form of philosophy; meditation counted for more than beauty in it; but the scene was the English country, and the characters were rustics. There was, too, something of imaginative untruth in it, no doubt, similar to that inherent in all pastoral poetry. These common men, however, were not individuals, but stood for man, and Wordsworth, in delineating their histories, was writing a parable as well as a story. In other portions of his verse he used a more abstract method. As a moralist he was much given to maxims; and in all that concerns the social and political life of man, as well as his personal relations to

virtue, Wordsworth was, as the critic affirms with much emphasis, filled with a certain ardor, which may be called passion if one likes. The lack of passion in the ordinary sense — and it cannot be made out that Wordsworth possessed this quality — only renders more plain the moral endowment of the poet, his absorbing interest in the manly virtues, and the supreme value which he placed on the spiritual life and its ideal relations. He considered these relations most directly as existing toward nature, and having their operation in the emotion which nature excites. He did not altogether escape from the pantheism incident to such a constant preoccupation of the mind with the works and course of nature, and consequently he is less distinctively Christian than Spenser; but Aubrey de Vere easily makes it out that Wordsworth's philosophy, much as it differed from Spenser's, is concerned with the same topics of moral and spiritual life, and is the substance of his poetry.

It is not surprising that a writer of Aubrey de Vere's temperament is annoyed by the charge that Wordsworth is destitute of "passion." He has much to say on this point. Wordsworth himself gave as the rea-

son why he did not write love-poems the fear that they would be too passionate. Aubrey de Vere makes what defense he can by pointing out the half-dozen idealizations of woman in the shorter lyrics; but his real apology consists in the counter-assertion that Wordsworth is especially distinguished for "passion." He uses the word, however, with a difference, and means by it the poetic glow, the exaltation of feeling, the lyrical possession, which attends the moment of creation and passes into the verse. Of this sort of passion every form of poetry is as capable as is the amorous: the *sæva indignatio* of satire would come under this head as properly as the moral enthusiasm or the patriotic fervor shown in the Ode to Duty or the Sonnets. Wordsworth truly possessed this capability, and it gives to his poems their masculine strength. Whether equal success is to be credited to the critic's glosses upon the more commonplace subjects of Wordsworth's muse, is doubtful; it seems rather that he makes the mistake which Coleridge attributed to Wordsworth himself, of giving a value to the idea which it has in his own mind, but which it does not have in the bare words addressed to the reader. When

the idea and the expression are not identical, every poet suffers from this cause; in his mind the idea, coming first, dignifies the words, but to the reader the words coming first, too often mutilate the idea. It is a good result of Aubrey de Vere's Wordsworthianism that it gives him courage to force into the front of his essay the Orphic Odes, which are among the least known of the poet's work, and contain some of the noblest of his lines.

To Milton he seems somewhat unjust. The earlier poems receive his warm appreciation, but of the later ones he is hardly so tolerant, and nowhere does he give him his due. This is the passage: —

"It is not, however, its deficient popularity so much as its subject and its form which proves that Milton's great work is not a national poem, high as it ranks among our national triumphs. Some will affirm that he illustrated in that work his age if not his country. His age, however, gave him an impulse rather than materials. Puritanism became transmuted, as it passed through his capacious and ardent mind, into a faith Hebraic in its austere spirit — a faith that sympathized indeed with the Iconoclastic zeal

which distinguished the anti-Catholic and anti-patristic theology of the age, but held little consort with any of the complex definitions at that time insisted on as the symbols of Protestant orthodoxy. Had the Puritan spirit been as genuine a thing as the spirit of liberty which accompanied it; had it been such as their reverence for Milton makes many suppose it to have been, the mood would not so soon have yielded to the licentiousness that followed the Restoration. . . . To him the classic model supplied, not the adornment of his poem, but its structure and form. The soul that wielded that mould was, if not exactly the spirit of Christianity, at least a religious spirit — profound, zealous, and self-reverent — as analogous, perhaps, in its temper to the warlike religion of the Eastern Prophet as to the traditional faith of the Second Dispensation. Such was the mighty fabric which, aloof and in his native land an exile, Milton raised; not perfect, not homogeneous, not in any sense a national work, but the greatest of all those works which prove that a noble poem may be produced with little aid from local sympathies, and none from national traditions."

Some expressions in this passage, and

many others scattered through these volumes, indicate where the current of sympathy was broken by default of which the critic understands Milton imperfectly. Ideal he was, but there is no poet who is more bone and flesh of the English nation in the substance of his genius, or in whom it developed a spirituality more noble; nor are his defects, in his conception of womanhood for example, such as cannot be easily paralleled from the other poets of highest genius in the line from Spenser. But, on the other hand, the critic is more than just to Keats, and towards Shelley he exhibits a respect, a penetration of the elements of his thoughtful temperament, and a comprehension of the remarkable and intimate changes of his incessant growth, that are almost unexampled in authors writing from Aubrey de Vere's standpoint. In writing of the others he has opportunity for still further illustration of the theory of poetry he holds, and he shows that these later poets have their best success the closer they keep to the subject of man, and the more they treat it with a pure, spiritual method; while on the other hand, they are defective in proportion as they fail in this.

It would be impossible for a critic with

such standards as these to pass in review the work of the moderns, and not to notice the general decline in the moral weight and the spirituality of late poetic literature. Materialism, both as respects the objects of man's pursuit and the character of his speculation in philosophy, has been so important and growing a factor of the times, that, if there is any validity in this theory of poetry, it must follow that our poetic work has lost elevation, meaning, and utility. Religion itself, so far as the general thought of nineteenth-century civilization is concerned, has suffered a diminution of its authority, and consequently the spiritual life of man has filled a less prominent part in the eyes of these generations.

In connection with this, room should be made for some original remarks of the writer upon the Pagan element in our modern poetry. He is very well affected towards Platonism, and recognizes it historically as "the chief secondary cause of the diffusion of Christianity, doing for it more than the favor of Constantine could ever have done." He thus affirms for Greek religion and Greek philosophy "an element of greatness and truth." Our poets, in returning to its

life and thought, seem to him to be making a return to the spiritual element which in the revolutionary ages has been obscured and too often lost. He speaks in this as a Catholic, but he is more Christian than Catholic, if it may be permitted to say so; and all religious writers admit and lament the inroad of skepticism and consequent materialism. The turn he gives to these facts is a striking one: —

"The arts of the Middle Ages soared above Paganism: the imaginative mind of modern times stands for the most part aloof from it; but it often stands aloof from Christianity also. Secularity is its prevailing character, while even in Paganism there is a spiritual element. We may not, without a risk of insincerity and presumption, indulge in either an exultation or a regret higher than corresponds with our low position. Can we with truth say that the portion of our modern literature which reverts to ancient mythology is less religious than the rest? Is it not, in the case of some authors, the only portion which has any relations, even through type or symbol, with religious ideas? Would Dante, would even Milton, have found more to sympathize with

in the average of modern literature than in Homer or in Sophocles, in Wordsworth's Laodamia or Keats's Hymn to Pan? What proportion of our late poetry is Christian either in spirit or in subject — nay, in traditions and associations? Admirable as much of it is, it is not for its spiritual tendencies that it can be commended. Commonly it shares the material character of our age, and smells of the earth; at other times, recoiling from the sordid, it flies into the fantastic. . . . It is our life which is to be blamed; our poetry has been but the reflection of that life."

This is valuable, not only for its suggestion, but because it sums up and speaks out plainly the protest which is implicit in all this criticism. The æsthetic lover of beauty, the artist who is satisfied with feats of poetic craft, will not find anything to his liking in Aubrey de Vere's essays. They are presided over by a severe Platonism intellectually, by an exacting and all-including Christianity when the subject touches upon man's life, and they will prove somewhat difficult reading, perhaps, because the thought continually reverts to great ideas, to that doctrine of life which the author seeks for in the poets,

and prizes as the substance of their works. But it is well, in poetic days like these, to be brought back to the more serious muses which inspired the great ideal works of our literature, and to converse with them under the guidance of such a spirit as fills these essays with a sense of the continual presence in great literature of the higher interests of man, his life on earth, and his spiritual relation to the universe. These essays contain the fruits of habitual familiarity with poetry, the convictions of a lifetime with regard to those things which are still important subjects of thought to thoughtful men; and there is, mingled with the style, the sweet persuasiveness of a refined and liberal nature, which is only too well aware that it must plead its cause, and pleads with strength and charm.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF IDEALISM.

I. THE PERGAMON MARBLES.

THE development of the Greek genius in sculpture, after it had passed its first maturity in Phidias and his immediate successors, presented the same characteristic signs shown in the history of other modes of artistic expression in other nations. A reasoned conception of the ends and means, a trained appreciation of form, a complete mastery of technique, were inherited by the sculptors of Pergamon. The purpose being defined and the tools perfected, no originality was allowed them except in style; and consequently their work, like the last dramas of Shakespeare, or the creations of Browning or Carlyle, exhibits an excess of subject, an effort to put the utmost of muscular action, of narrative import, of allegorized truth, into their marbles. And yet, in connection with this intensity, as it is called, it cannot fail to be observed that their sculp-

ture (herein touched with the decadence) breathes the self-glorifying spirit of triumphant skill, rather than the overmastering idealism of the earlier patriotic and religious motives. In their pictorial composition and landscape backgrounds, also, one is tempted to discern the harmful influence of that so vaguely known school of painting that flourished in the preceding period, and to piece out by conjecture our fragmentary conceptions of its manner. It is complained that modern sculpture is too pictorial; almost as soon as the art was recovered in Italy it fell into the same error, particularly in relief work; but in Greece the profuse use of color on the marble, as ground and also for direct decoration, together with the employment of metals and jewels as additional adornment, must have brought the two arts so closely together that the transference of modes of treatment was inevitable. The striking thing is that painting, then as now, seems by its greater compass to overpower its more hampered rival.

Besides this tendency to overtax the power of expression by the weight of subject, and this pride in mere technique in close association with a humiliating imitation of a dif-

ferent art, these Pergamon sculptures display other marks of being essentially quite modern. Their realism is especially noticeable. The Greeks of the elder time, it must be acknowledged, were remarkably fortunate in that their realistic spirit fell in with an actual existence which itself appealed to the imagination in many ways. In the Athenian prime the life that taught Sophocles and Agathon was heroic or idyllic, and needed hardly a touch to exalt its elements into the most imaginative idealism. When Plato could not write a dialogue without making a drama, nor Aristophanes compose a comedy without breaking into the sweetest lyric song, nor Phidias chisel a flying fold except for eternity, a presence was upon the earth and a spirit in men that made realism not less trustworthy as a guide to sculptors than is the "Look into thy heart and write" as a maxim for poets like Sidney. But when the barbarians broke in from the north upon Asia Minor, and the luxury of oriental manners and the fantasies of oriental mind stole upon the old order and changed it, to study the real was not necessarily to achieve the beautiful. The barbarians chiseled by the Pergamon sculptors are very different

from those that once adorned the Parthenon: they are fierce, ugly, portrait-like, studied from the life. The giants, too, by the same artists are not even altogether human, as in the older reliefs, but many are monstrous: conglomerates of snaky folds and Titanic limbs and ox necks, finny wings, pointed ears, horns, and such Egyptian and Assyrian confusions. For this debasement of the type, few will consider the wonderful finish, the minute and successful imitation of fur, scale, and stuff, a compensation. So, too, the representation of mortal agony is, in these works, carried to an extreme of truthfulness that is upon the verge of the revolting. This new bent of realism which, ceasing to select from the beautiful in life, now takes these three directions, — toward the portraiture of types not noble, toward the close copying of accessories not important, and toward the reproduction of shocking aspects of existence, — this essential difference between the art of Athens and of Pergamon, it would be but too easy to parallel in more than one province of our own intellectual life. These remarks, although they were not meant to point such a moral, incidentally illustrate how misleading is the

the word "ancient" when applied to the Greeks. Wherever approached, they are as level to our own times in thought and deed as any of the so-called moderns: and though their language, in its former dialect, is dead, its golden words always fall upon our ears as if from the lips of some wiser contemporary. In looking on these recovered marble fragments, just as in reading the Antigone or Alcestis, the centuries seem meaningless.

II. A GREEK TRAIT NOTICED BY DR. WALDSTEIN.

One distinction between the Greeks and ourselves may be expressed by saying that our culture as a people rests upon literature, on the printed word, while that of the Greeks based itself rather upon observation, on the thing seen. The divergence of intellectual mood thus induced between ancient and modern is profound, and affects the whole higher life. In reflecting upon this classical trait, however, something is to be guarded against. It is well known that the illiterate, generally speaking, think in images, and that this power or habit of visualization, sometimes thought to be characteristic of the poet, be it observed, usually falls into disuse

in proportion to the increase and continuity of exclusively literary culture in the individual, until the point is reached at which a man thinks without having a single image definitely projected upon the mind's eye; his mental processes are, in fact, as colorless and formless as algebraic calculations. Mr. Galton's experiments in this matter are still fresh in our memories. Now it is not to be inferred that this was always the case, nor indeed that the intellect of highest development may not in the past, at least, have habitually thought in images, as the unlettered do to-day; and in Greece it appears that the picture language of the mind, as one may call it, held a place more important than with us, and perhaps equivalent to our own idea language. The Greek, as every one knows, peopled the earth with presiding geniuses, of more or less exalted rank, from Oread and Naiad, to the great Zeus of Olympus. These forms we call imaginary, and to our thought they are always tenuous; the point to be remembered is that, when the Greek spoke of Athene, an image came before his mind, and one not hypothetical and consciously symbolical, like Liberty with her cap, but definite, real, and awful, like the

statue on the pediment or in the temple. The Greek mind leaned on these images as our mind does on the alphabet in all mental life; hence the poetry and the art of the age had a certain ease and naturalness, an intimacy with things seen by the eye, not equaled in the work of later times, except possibly in Italy. Dr. Waldstein points out that the most striking expression of this plastic necessity, inherent in Greek thinking, is the doctrine of Platonic ideas. To the moderns, however tolerant they may be, there seems always a childishness, a grotesque quality, the more marked because of Plato's splendid and rich endowment, in the continual insistence in his philosophy on the "ideas" of the table and the flute,—the table without any definite number of legs, the flute without any particular quality of sound; and the case is not much helped, even if one perceives, as Schopenhauer shows, that the doctrine is essentially accurate in truth, and wholly intelligible, since it is merely the modern statement of the subjectivity of time and space put conversely. Notwithstanding these admissions, our minds still find the Platonic ideas awkward to deal with. But that Plato, at the end of his ab-

strusest speculations, and at the threshold of one of the greatest generalizations of the human intellect, fell back upon the image-forming faculty, and insisted on particularizing the universal by means of a mystery or fiction of thought, is a crowning proof of the pervasiveness and inner mastery of the plastic spirit in the culture of his civilization.

This trait of the Greeks has been dwelt on, in the present instance, less for itself than for its bearing on the idealism of the art of Phidias, of which the marbles of the Parthenon are the great examples. Of course Dr. Waldstein, who knows the value of this supreme achievement of the idealistic temperament in man, is himself an idealist, and when he has occasion to analyze the monuments treats at more or less length of the theory of idealism. He distinguishes at once two kinds of physical representation, the portrait and the type, and affirms an analogous difference in representations of the spirit that animates the stone, — the man as he is, and the man as he ought to be. He observes, too, that the Greeks were fortunately supplied with subjects of sculpture in which both the physical and spiritual perfection of man were proper elements, and, in-

deed, requisite; namely, the heroes and the gods. The higher life was the theme of their art in its greatest excellence, not as a possible but as an actual existence. This of itself was a valuable help to them, for centres of imagination were thus determined for them and given a certain external validity; whereas among the moderns art is felt to be in its essence a mode of subjective creation, having no reality except in thought. The resulting sense of uncertainty, the weakened faith in such emanations of man's brain, almost inevitable for the contemporary poet or artist, is one cause of the recoil of our imagination from the ideal, and of the attraction of realism for our writers, and perhaps of our content with a literature and art that will have fact for its province. "Let us have facts," is the cry; "of truth — that is, the relation of facts — who can be certain? Let us represent men as they are; of men as they ought to be who has any observation?" And even within these limits of the new school it is said, furthermore, that attention is to be paid to the individual: not to man as he is, but to this man, taken at random, as he is. The type is too general to be depicted, too far re-

moved from actual seeing, too much an abstraction of the mind. It is plain that at the root of the difficulty felt by the realists who theorize in this way lies the conviction that the further the literary or any other representative art gets from the special fact, trait, or passion in its particular manifestation, the more vague, doubtful, pale, rubbed-out, — in a word, the more generalized, — it becomes, and hence loses sharpness, vigor, and illusiveness. But with the Greek the case was clearly quite otherwise. There was no loss of individualization in the type, whether of physical or of spiritual perfection. This Theseus or that Hermes is ideal; both are generalized from men, but they suffer no loss of vitality thereby. The idealism of Athens did not fade out in abstraction, but embodied the permanent elements of harmonious beauty in body and spirit, in forms "more real than living man." The habit of thinking in images, or with fixed associations of images, with general notions, was one reason for this success, undoubtedly; but before concluding that the literary and rationalizing culture of our day forbids us to hope for a similar blending of the type with individuality, let us remember

that as with Phidias, so with Shakespeare: Hamlet is at once the type and the man. The poet born cannot turn aside, on this hand, into science, as the realists do; nor on that hand, into philosophy, as the allegorists do. To him that ideal art alone is possible in which the two are united in the expression of permanent and universal truth through selected facts.

Nevertheless, it may be urged, the Greeks passed rapidly from the idealistic to the realistic stage. And in connection with this one observes the happiness with which Dr. Waldstein identifies the elements of likeness between the Greeks and the moderns, just as he opposes their differences to each other. The most admirable example is an inquiry into the æsthetical qualities of the Hermes of Praxiteles, and in the course of it he delineates the characteristics of the age of Praxiteles, and parallels them with the traits of the time just subsequent to the French Revolution. In doing this he incidentally describes the common spirit in Shelley, Musset, and other representatives of an art, not of the noblest, but not of the worst either, of the interval after the great age, yet before the marked decadence. It may

be said that the English never had an age of the Phidian kind; in European culture that is to be sought, if at all, in mediæval art. The Praxitelean age, however, was reproduced in essence in the first generation of our romantic period. A certain pathos, felt in view both of the world and of one's self, is perhaps its dominant quality, and with it go a sophistication, a self-consciousness, a reflectiveness, a slight yet not complete abstraction of the spirit from the object before it, illustrated by the expression of the head of Hermes in relation to the infant Dionysus on his arm. It is the mood of one whose spontaneous joy has been disturbed forever by thought. In such work one sees that the objective character of art, as it was in Phidias, is yielding to a new impulse; that the hold of the imagination on the divine and the eternal is slowly relaxing. At last, idealism went out in Greece, and, either in the shape of the portrait statues, or of such sculptures as those of Pergamon, realism came in to be the be-all and also the end-all of art.

Why was it, one asks, that the plastic nature of the Greeks did not preserve them, if the image-making faculty did in fact count

so much in their development? How did they come to lose the ideal forms that sprang in the mind of Phidias when he thought of beauty and virtue? One cannot say that idealism failed, for its triumph in the Parthenon marbles marks the highest point ever reached by the human imagination in embodying its vision. It died out, and one says in explanation that the attention given to technique at last led to a disregard of the idea; or that the mere ability to reproduce details exactly was a temptation to apply art to deceptive imitation of the seen instead of to an illusive expression of the unseen; or that the age had lost the great ideas themselves, the perception of beauty and virtue, the belief in them and honor for them, and hence necessarily declined upon the things of this world, — that is, upon what is seen by the bodily eye rather than in the realm of thought and spiritual insight: and of these explanations perhaps one is as true as another, for they are all descriptions, from different standpoints, of what actually occurred. It is impossible, however, that in view of this history, and of the similar course in the development of mediæval painting, one should not ask him-

self whether the rise and defense of realism among us mean that literature is to follow in the same track, and die, as sculpture and painting died, until a new age shall set the wheel turning again; for if the history of the arts teaches anything, it is that the ages of idealism are the ages of power, and those of realism the premonition and stiffening of death.

III. MR. PATER ON IDEAL ÆSTHETICISM.

The heart of Mr. Pater's Marius lies in his thought about the ideal, and it is in the nature of all such thought to make a peculiar demand upon the reader. Its wisdom is felt to be, as it were, sacerdotal, and requires a conscious preparation of mind in him who would know of it; its vision is supernal, and disclosed only when some spiritual illumination has been sent before. So runs a Platonic doctrine of election and grace that has been held as rigorously in literature as in theology. This aristocracy of idealism — its exclusiveness, its jealousy of any intrusion of the common and worldly within the company it keeps, its sense of a preciousness, as of sacred things, within itself — is incorporate in every fibre of Mr.

Pater's work; and he makes the demand natural to it, not only implicitly by an unrelaxing use of such æsthetic and intellectual elements as appeal exclusively to the subtlest faculties of appreciation in their highest development, but explicitly also by the character of his hero. Marius, before he became an Epicurean, was moulded for his fate; his creator demanded an exceptional nature for the æsthetic ideal to react upon in a noble way, and so Marius was born in the upland farm among the fair mountains to the north of Pisa, and was possessed from boyhood of the devout seriousness, the mood of trustful waiting for the god's coming, which is exacted in all profound idealism. "*Favete linguis!* With the lad Marius there was a devout effort to complete this impressive outward silence by that inward taciturnity of mind esteemed so important by religious Romans in the performance of their sacred functions." Marius was born one of the choice natures in whom the heavenly powers are well pleased; and emphasis must be given to this circumstance because it follows that the ideal life which he lived, deeply meditated though it is, is really an individual one. Marius is not typical, nor even

illustrative in any broad way of the practice of æsthetic morals; and yet, since he is not national, nor local, nor historic, in his essential self, since he is more than an enlightened philosopher, and yet less than the enlightened Christian, since his personality approaches the elect souls of other ages, other sentiments and devotions, and yet is without any real contact with them, he is typical and illustrative perhaps of something that might be. This confusedness of impression springs from the fact that Mr. Pater, while he imagines in Italy, always thinks in London; he has modernized his hero, has Anglicized him, indeed, and nevertheless has not really taken him out of the second century. It was a bold thing to attempt. It was necessary for his purposes as an evangelist of ideal living, and perhaps within the range of moral teaching it is successful; but the way in which it was done is a main point of interest.

A Roman Epicurean, one suspects, was not unlike the proverbial Italianated Englishman. The native incompatibility between the distinctive Roman temperament and the light-hearted gayety of Greek sensuousness was similiar to that between the

English and the Italian character in the later times; the perfection of Marius by means of a Greek ideal may run parallel with English culture under southern influences. There was, too, in Roman character a trait or two which brings it near to qualities that lie at the base of our own stock. Even in the Italian landscape there are Northern notes such as Mr. Pater mentions when Marius, in his walks to the coast, sees "the marsh with the dwarf roses and wild lavender, the abandoned boat, the ruined floodgates, the flock of wild birds." We are told, also, that "poetic souls in old Italy felt, hardly less strongly than the English, the pleasures of winter, of the hearth, with the very dead warm in its generous heat, keeping the young myrtles in flower, though the hail is beating hard without." This note of Marius's home-life and the love he had for it, with his particular regard for "Domiduca, the goddess who watches over one's safe coming home," and with the ideal of maternity that grew up in his memory of home, — this peculiarly English note is struck in the opening and is dominant at the end. Certain other characteristics ally this Etrurian boy with that nobler strain of

English blood, the Puritan strain as it was in Spenser. His instinctive seriousness, his scrupulosity of conscience, his inheritance of a certain sombreness from the stock that adorned the Etruscan funeral urns, his attachment to places and awe of some of them as sacred by the touch of a divine power, his sense of invisible enemies about his path, his rigorous self-discipline in preparation for certain hereditary sacred offices, a deadly earnestness at times, — as when he gazes so fixedly on the rigid corpse of his friend Flavian, — such are some of the traits that define his nature as essentially rather Northern than Southern, and provide a ground of special sympathy and understanding for us.

The second device by which Marius is modernized is by giving to him a power which, for one who runs as he reads, makes the character incredible. He is said to be affected sometimes in a way the opposite of the experience which many have who, on seeing a new place, seem to have been there before: Marius feels, in the most marked of his experiences, something that shall be, — he has always a prescience. Thus, in the cadence of Flavian's verses he hears the music of the Latin hymnology; in the sight

of his second friend, Cornelius, who displays and puts on his armor of a Roman knight in the dusty sunshine of the shuttered country-house, he foresees the Christian chivalry; in the faces and groups of the worshippers in Cecilia's house he discerns the serene light and streaming joy of Giotto's and of Dante's vision, and looks on the Madonna and the Child that Raphael first painted. In all this there seems an unreality; in the Puritan Roman, the Cyrenaic Christian, there is a sense almost of conscious artifice, as if one were being befooled. And yet, as for those Northern notes of landscape, custom, and character, scholarship can give chapter and verse for them; and as for the gift of prescience, — well, if it were impossible for Marius to have it, in a sufficient measure at least, then the theory of ideal living which he held to was at fault. And this Marius, so constituted, his creator places in an Italy over which the romantic desolation, which we know, was laying its charm of dreamful decay, and in a Rome which, then as now, was the huddled deposit of religions.

The intellectual conviction on which Marius conducted his life was simple and common enough, as must be the case with every

theory capable of being made a principle of living. The world is what we think it, and our part in existence is the fleeting moment of present consciousness. What shall be done with this moment? Economize it, said Marius, in dissent from the Stoic who said, "Contemn it." Economize it; make the most of the phenomena that arise in it, and see, so far as it depends on you, that these phenomena, both of sensation and idea, as they arise, are the most valuable possible to the moment; and so your experience — in other words, your life — will be the fullest and most refined. Above all, do not forget the main thing in this doctrine of economy, which is that the worth of experience depends, not on what it is at the moment in its detached and transitory phase, but on what it will prove in memory when it takes its place permanently and in relation to the whole of life. In such a scheme, receptivity, the most alert and varied powers of taking in impressions, is the one aim of cultivation. Here, too, much depended on the nature of Marius, this time on the side of his Southern endowment. An impressibility through sensation was his gift, his talent; and especially he was susceptible to what the eye observes:

he was one of those who are "made perfect by the love of visible beauty." This is the point of union of his life with the æsthetic ideal, and makes the story of it a pathway through scenes of loveliness not unlike, in a certain mild beauty, the frescoes on ancient walls. The narrative is pictorial, almost to the point of decoration, and moves always with an outlook on some fair sight. From the landscape of the villa where Marius was born — among those delightful Etrurian hills whence one looks to the marbled rifts of Carrara gleaming above olive and chestnut slopes, and gazes off through the purple sea-valley of Venus's Port, the noblest gateway of the descending sun — to the last throttling earthquake morning, a beautiful visible world is about us, and exercises its attractiveness both in nature and in humanity. The one end of Marius was to appropriate all this, to choose the best of sensation and its most nearly connected emotions, and to live in that. To do this involves a secondary talent, a gift of insight, a power to perceive relative values, which in reality means a faculty of moral discrimination; and just here one may easily fail to see whence Marius derived this.

Why was it, for example, that he, being so attached to sensation and the emotions that cling closest to it, rejected voluptuousness, with all its forms of beauty and joyfulness, as a thing essentially not beautiful nor joyful? What was it that kept him, the comrade of Flavian, who represents the pagan surrender to this life, pure, — so pure, indeed, that with his visionary sense he foresaw in chastity an ideal that was to be, and foreknew its coming beauty? A mere interpreter of character, an analyst, would say, that Marius obeyed in these choices his own nature, — that Puritan nature whose compulsion is always strong. He venerated his own soul and cherished its early instincts, and this was his salvation. But one might also give another explanation, which would seem more harmonious with the purpose of the author; one might say that what is moral is in its outward manifestation so clothed with beauty, visible beauty, that the man who looks for beauty only, the noblest, the ideal beauty, will find therewith the highest, the ideal good. It is essential to such a seeker that he shall look with his own eyes and be frank with himself; shall "look straight out" and acknowledge what he sees; and

this Marius does, thereby prefiguring in a way and practically making that "return to nature" which is the continually recurring necessity of all sincerity. If virtue does in fact wear this outward loveliness — and who would deny it? — why may not the lover of beauty have truly seen the new and springing forms of goodness, recognized them, and taken their promise into his life? In other words, was not that prescience of Marius merely a power of clear and honest seeing of the elements of beauty and ugliness there before him?

That this is Mr. Pater's view of the matter is indicated most definitely by the contrast which he continually insists on between Marcus Aurelius and Marius, and which he brings out clearly in the attitude of these two toward the gladiatorial shows. In the amphitheatre Marius is conscious of the Emperor, the strenuous Stoic, as "eternally his inferior on the question of righteousness." The young Epicurean has a "decisive conscience on sight" which is indubitable, — that conscience which, in its condemnation of the great sin of an age, is the touchstone of the select few in it, and makes them on the side of the future and aware of its excellence

to be, when "not to have been, by instinctive election, on the right side was to have failed in life." Aurelius, we are told, made the great mistake: *Vale, anima infelicissima!* is the last word of our author to him on the eve of the persecutions. And the reason is, that the Stoic was truly blind; he had paltered with his senses until they lied to him, or spoke not at all. Marius saw the deformity of the evil, and, while rejecting it as something he might not see and live, chose the good by its beauty, and so selected in the midst of that Roman corruption the Christian elements in whose excellence the Church would triumph and be made fair.

There may be some surprise in perceiving in the evangel of æstheticism a morality of this height, a concentration of attention on the beauty of austerity, an exaltation of a noble Puritanism toward which the Cyrenaic ideal may lead. When this is understood, however, one finds it natural enough that the pervading tone of this history of an ideal life is really religious; idealism, when it is living, cannot be otherwise than essentially religious. Nevertheless, it is a bold thing to put the question, as Mr. Pater implicitly does, whether an attention to the beautiful,

to visible beauty, may not only be equivalent to moral discrimination and a safeguard of virtue, but also a mode of solving the ultimate religious questions of deity and man's relation to it. Marius does arrive at an intimation, perhaps a faith, that a protective divine companionship goes beside him, and at an emotion of gratitude to that unseen presence.

Two points only, in this wide branch of the speculation, can be dwelt on now. He says toward the end that he thinks he has failed in love; and here he touches on one weakness of his ideal, for it is only by love, as he perceives, that any reconciliation between the lover of beauty and the multitudinous pitiful pain which is so large a part of the objective universe can be obtained. The second weakness is perhaps greater. In his ideal there is both doubt and isolation; the subjective element in his knowledge, the exclusive reliance on his own impressions, the fact that in metaphysical belief the world is only his world, and in actual living the experience is individual, — all this holds in it a basis of ultimate incertitude. True and real for him it no doubt is, but is that, indeed, the necessary limit of knowledge and

life? In effect, too, his creed is Protestant; independently of the necessary element of doubt in it, it has the isolating force inevitable to the believer who will accept only the results of his own examination by exercise of private judgment. This position is unsatisfactory; and it seems to allow the rationality of that principle of authority by which an individual life obtains correction for its idiosyncrasies, cancels the personal error, and at the same time lets in upon itself the flood of the total experience of humanity summed up and defined in the whole body of the elect. Though stated here in terms of the Stoical philosophy, this is the Catholic conclusion. Or, if Marius does not quite assent to this, he does accept it in a half-hearted way as an hypothesis which is worth making since it reunites him to mankind. There is, it may be observed, a tendency toward Catholicism throughout the religious speculation. Another note of it, for example, is the attraction felt by Marius in the ritual of worship, as the perfection of that ceremonialism to which, in his boyish worship of the old gods, he was devoutly trained.

After all, at the end one still states the

promises of this æsthetic ideal, even when working on so unusual a nature as Marius's, interrogatively. Marius's life does not set it forth with convincing power. For one thing, it is not a vital life, but a painted one; and there is an inconsequence in the series of pictures, — they do not seem to follow one another by any iron necessity. It would be foolish to complain that a life avowedly only receptive and contemplative of the beautiful is inactive. Marius does nothing except at the end. Yet, within such limits, one never sees how beauty affected Marius or developed his soul, and though he is said to have got much from companionship, one sees love operant in him very seldom, and then it is a very silent and unexpressed love. He repeats his own epitaph, — *tristem neminem fecit*, — and it was true; but all his life seems negative, and continually one asks, How did he really live? and gets no answer. His whole life was a *meditatio mortis*, — that is all that is told us.

A sense of failure, or rather of incompleteness, oppresses one at the end of the narrative. Even granting that the success Marius is said to have achieved — one is never quite sure that he did — by that exquisite

appreciation of beauty and impassioned contemplation of its ideal forms, was, in fact, his; yet of what worth was it, — what did it mean to either God or man? The Northern idealist, the Puritan, cannot dispense with some serviceableness as essential to any high living. One should not push the point too far, however. Independently of all that has been said, any one who cares to think on counsels of perfection for man's life will find profound and original thought about the ideal elements still at hand in modern days for use, and many wise reflections, sown in this history. It is a rare work, and not carelessly to be read. Some exquisiteness of taste, some delight in scholarship, some knowledge of what is best worth knowing in the historic expressions of man's aspiration, and, above all, that "inward tacitness of mind" the reader must bring to its perusal. What of it? Have we not the highest authority for casting our pearls where Circe's herd cannot come?

REMARKS ON SHELLEY.

I. HIS CAREER.

THE natural charm by which Shelley fascinated his familiar friends lives after him, and has gathered about him for his defense a group of men whose affection for him seems no whit lessened because they never knew him face to face. The one common characteristic prominent in all who have written of him with sympathy, however meagre or valuable their individual contributions of praise, criticism, or information, is this sentiment of direct, intimate, intense personal loyalty which he has inspired in them to a degree rare, if not unparalleled, in literary annals. Under the impulse of this strong love, they have championed his cause, until his fame, overshadowed in his own generation by the vigorous worldliness of Byron, and slightly esteemed by nearly all of his craft, has grown world-wide. With the enthusiasts, however, who have aided in bringing about this result, admiration for

Shelley's work is a secondary thing; its virtue is blended with and transfused into the nature of Shelley himself, who is the centre of their worship. To reveal the fineness and lustre of his character, his essential worth throughout that romantic and darkened career of thirty years, is their chief pleasure, and in this, too, they have now won some success, and have partially reversed the popular estimate of the poet as merely an immoral atheist; yet, although some amends have been made for harsh contemporary criticism, Shelley's name is still for orthodoxy a shibboleth of pious terror and of insult to God. It is still too early to decide whether the modification of the harsh criticism once almost universally bestowed upon Shelley will go on permanently, or whether it is not in some measure due to peculiar results of culture in our own time. Without attempting to prejudge this question, especially in regard to poetic fame, there seems to be, as the cause passes out of the hands of those who knew Shelley personally into the guardianship of the new generation, a tendency toward greater unity of judgment in regard to the larger phases of his character and conduct.

Shelley, as Swinburne said of William Blake, was born into the church of rebels; he was born, also, gentle, loving, and fearless. The dangers to which such a natural endowment would inevitably expose him were aggravated by a misguided education, and by the temper of that feverish and ill-regulated age in which modern reform began. He was in early years first of all a revolter; he would do only what seemed to him best, and in the way which seemed to him best; he took nothing upon authority, he acknowledged no validity in the customs and beliefs which past experience had bequeathed to men; he must examine every conclusion anew, and accept or reject it by the light of his own limited thought and observation; he carried the Protestant spirit to its ultimate extreme — all legal and intellectual results embodied in institutions or in accepted beliefs must show cause to him why they should exist. He was, moreover, in haste; he could not rest in a doubt, he could not suspend his judgment, he could not wait for fuller knowledge. Finding only incomplete or incompetent answers to his questioning, he leaped to the conclusion that there was no answer. Had he been

contented with allowing this spirit to influence only his own private creed and conduct, mischief enough was sure to be wrought for him, error and suffering were in store for him in no common degree. But he was not merely building an ideal of life and formulating a rule of living for himself; he had, as he afterward confessed, a passion for reforming the world. He was early in print, and aspired to teach the world before he was well out of his teens, — took in his hands, indeed, the regeneration of Ireland through pamphlets, and public eloquence, and personal agitation and supervision. It is easy to dismiss this as the foolish conceit of a boy of talent much given to dreaming. It is easy, too, to dismiss his exile from his home and his expulsion from Oxford as childish obstinacy, disobedience, ingratitude, and presumption; but if there was anything of these faults in him there was also much more made evident in these first trials of his character: there was the capacity for sacrifice, the resolution to be faithful to the truth as he saw it. The beginning of manhood found him in the full sway of immature conviction, and already suffering the penalty. It is not necessary to follow out in detail

the development of a life so entered upon. It led him to attack Christianity and to disregard the law of marriage, and this is the sum and substance of his offense. Yet no sign, perhaps, is so indicative of the increased liberality of religion in our time as the attempt which has been made to show that Shelley was essentially Christian, an attempt so common and vigorous that Trelawney felt called upon to protest against it. In this spirit Mr. Symonds writes from one extreme: "It is certain that as Christianity passes beyond its mediæval phase, and casts aside the husk of outworn dogmas, it will more and more approximate to Shelley's exposition. Here, and here only, is a vital faith adapted to the conditions of modern thought, indestructible because essential, and fitted to unite instead of separating minds of divers quality"; and Rev. F. W. Robertson, from the other extreme, writes: "I cannot help feeling that there was a spirit in poor Shelley's mind which might have assimilated with the spirit of his Redeemer, — nay, which I will dare to say was kindred with that spirit, if only his Redeemer had been differently imaged to him. . . . I will not say that a man who by his

opposition to God means opposition to a demon, to whom the name of God in his mind is appended, is an enemy of God; . . . change the *name* and I will bid that *character* defiance with you!" A candid examination must show, however, that Trelawney is right; there is no doubt that Shelley rejected altogether what is properly known as Christianity, in youth violently and with hatred, while in later years he came to care less about it. At the same time it is to be remembered that he had seen Christianity only in those forms whose most prominent characteristic is defect in charity and love, which Shelley believed to be the central virtues. Probably he never dissociated the Christian God from the Jewish Jehovah, and his feeling towards him is well illustrated in the terrible indictment he makes against him in reference to Milton's delineation of Satan as one "who, in the cold security of undoubted triumph, inflicts upon his fallen enemy the most horrible punishment, not from any mistaken hope of thereby reforming him, but with the avowed purpose of exasperating him to deserve new torments." It is, therefore, impossible to deny Shelley's atheism; the most that can be con-

tended for is that in natural piety, in purity of life and motive, in conscientious and unselfish action, Shelley was exceptionally conspicuous.

It is here that the second charge against Shelley has its place. How, it is indignantly asked, was he unselfish, loving, and conscientious, when he left his youthful wife to circumstances which resulted in her suicide, and transferred his devotion to another? Nothing more can be done than to point out the fact that Shelley acted in harmony with his convictions of social duty; that the first marriage was the result of knight-errantry rather than affection, and had become destitute of any pleasure; that Shelley did not desert his wife in such a way as to make her suicide chargeable to him. These considerations do not, it is true, relieve him of condemnation, or remove the really great defect in his moral perception of the responsibility which rested upon him in consequence of a thoughtless and foolish marriage. Yet it is not doubtful that in his life he atoned for his error, if suffering is atonement; from that time a shadow fell upon him which never was removed. It is hard to find heart for reproach when one, whose whole gospel

was love, is so cruelly entangled in the unforeseen consequences of his acts that he seems to have wrought the work of hatred.

What, then, under this presentation of the case, remains to be said for that ideal character which those who love Shelley believe to have been his possession? That, beginning life with a theory which left every desire and impulse free course, which imposed no restrictions except those of his own honor and self-respect, which acknowledged no command not proceeding from his own reason, he yet served the truth he saw with entire loyalty and sincerity of heart; that, making many errors throughout a darkened life, he did not strive by lightness of heart or logical sophistication to avoid their penalties of misery and remorse, but kept them in memory and bore his burden of sorrow courageously; that by intense thought and bitter experience he came at last to find the laws of life and to obey them. He found how impossible it is for the individual to solve the problems put before him, so that he himself grew content to leave many of these in doubt; found how ignorant it was in him to make his own experience the measure of the conditions of general human

life, and attempt to reform the world's motives and standards by reference to that experience alone; found how little the individual counts for in life, so that the youth, who with fervid hope took up the regeneration of a whole nation in confidence, came to doubt whether it was worth while for him to write at all, and rated himself far below his friend Byron. These characteristics are the evidence of his strength, sincerity, and rightness of purpose; and through these he worked out an ideal of life and rule of living, which differed much from those of his early days. No ideal intrinsically more powerful in influence or more exalted in virtue has been worked out by men who, like himself, found the old familiar standards rationally inadequate and morally weak. These are the essential elements in Shelley's career, and to them his personal qualities and his daily life give form and color. This, too, is the work of a man framed for self-destruction, against whom circumstances did their worst throughout. The marvel is, not that his life was so broken in private happiness, and his public work so unequal in the worth of its results, but, taking all into account, that he saved so much of his life and

work through his perception of the valuable objects of living, and his clinging to them.

This, too, was the result of the imperfect years of preparation. He had given him only the traditional thirty years which belong to every genius for trial and training before the finished work can be required. He had just recognized the conditions to which he must conform, and was only ready to begin when he died.

II. HIS ACQUAINTANCES.

It is impossible to condense Shelley's Life in a clear way. One turns the pages, and owns for the thousandth time the fascination of Shelley, from the first glimpse of the boy, pressing his face against the window-pane to kiss his sister, to the hot July afternoon when he made his last embarkation, and the summer storm swept the gleaming mountains from his sight; but no art transmits the spell, and the story, clasped between these periods, must be left in its integrity. Shelley lived in solitude, and died before he was thirty years old; but his career involved such variety of scenes, persons, and incidents, was so thick-strewn with interesting episodes, and contained so many perplexed passages,

that it is a study by itself, and requires for its mastery an acquaintance with an extensive literature of its own. It were useless to attempt a criticism, or to describe Shelley anew, but some unstudied remarks upon his fortunes in life may be ventured upon.

Must one incur the charge of being supercilious and aristocratic if he acknowledges at once a feeling, after reading Shelley's life, of having been in very disagreeable company? Assuredly no one can rise from the perusal with a heightened respect for human nature, apart from Shelley. He was born a gentleman; his innate courtesy clothes him with attractiveness, and distinguishes him among his associates as a person of a different kind from them, in his actions and bearing; and the deference which Byron showed to him, it is not unlikely, sprang from a perception of this strain of breeding in him rather than from appreciation of his genius or his nature. In his earliest fellowship with school-friends, for whom he had a kindly regard at Eton and after they went down together to Oxford, though Hogg plainly obscures it, there is a gleam here and there of natural and equal companionship; but this morning ray soon dies out. He was, after-

wards, almost uniformly unfortunate in his acquaintances. His life was truly one long and sorrowful disillusion; and in it not the least part was the discovery of how he had been deceived in his judgment of persons.

Hogg was his first example. Shelley became familiar with him at Oxford, and, not content with having him for a bosom friend, wished to make him his brother-in-law. At that time Shelley was in the first crude ferment of his intellectual life, eagerly absorbing the new knowledge which came to him from his indiscriminate reading, and disputing on all the usual topics with vehement and unwearied earnestness, insatiable curiosity, and the delight of a youth who has just made the discovery that he has a mind of his own. His thoughts and letters were mostly polemical; ideal elements of morality were growing up in him, and radical views of conduct getting a hold in his convictions. He was willful, precipitate, and heedless through inexperience; he was thrown the more upon himself, and given a violent turn toward rebellion, to which he was prone enough, by his expulsion from Oxford, and the senseless attempt of his family to make him suppress his mental and

moral life by denying his first dear conclusions. In this state, partly from adventure and restlessness, perhaps, but also from a sense of obligation, the desire to spread his gospel, and by the mere favor of circumstances, he married his first wife, though he knew that his sympathies were more engaged than his heart.

At Edinburgh, whither the pair had gone, Hogg joined them, and with him they returned to York, where Shelley left his wife in his friend's care during a brief necessary absence. Hogg, who appears to have been not so pure as might be wished in his university days, tried to seduce her; and when Shelley came back he learned the facts. He loved Hogg; he was ashamed, he wrote, to tell him how much he loved him; he was grateful to him for having stood by him and shared his expulsion from the college; and he placed the most extravagant estimate upon his abilities. What followed upon the disclosure Shelley himself tells in a letter written at the time: —

"We walked to the fields beyond York. I desired to know fully the account of this affair. I heard it *from him*, and I believe he was sincere. All I can recollect of that ter-

rible day was that I pardoned him, — fully, freely pardoned him; that I would still be a friend to him, and hoped soon to convince him how lovely virtue was; that his crime, not himself, was the object of my detestation; that I value a human being not for what it has been, but for what it is; that I hoped the time would come when he would regard his horrible error with as much disgust as I did. He said little; he was pale, terror-struck, remorseful."

One may smile at this episode, if he be cynical, and has left youth far enough behind; but for all that, there is something pathetic in these sentences of boyish goodness, this simple belief in the moral principles which Shelley had found in his first search, and to which he had given the allegiance of his unworn heart; and in this scene of forgiveness, still confused with the emotions of first friendship betrayed, one perceives the Shelley we know, though he was not yet out of his teens. Some time elapsed before Shelley realized all the incident meant; then he wrote, "I leave him to his fate;" and when they met again in London, the old footing was gone forever.

Godwin, too, affords a capital example of

a shattered ideal. He was the Socrates of the young poet, and Shelley, who derived the main articles of his political and social creed from the radical philosopher's great book, was already adoring him as one in the pantheon of the immortal dead, when he learned from Southey that his master and emancipator still walked the earth. He sat down at once and wrote a characteristic epistle, in which he expressed himself with the enthusiasm of a disciple not yet twenty, and respectfully but earnestly besought the living friendship and advice of him whom he regarded as the light of the new age. Godwin was interested, and long and frequent letters, admirable in tone upon both sides, passed between them. The elder endeavored to check the irrepressible activity and eager plans of the young reformer, who had no notion of waiting until he should grow old before setting to work to remake society; and the youth, on his part, exhibited a deference and willingness to be guided such as he never showed before or afterwards. The first modification of Shelley's idea of Godwin came in consequence of their personal acquaintance, as was natural; but in discovering that Godwin was really an idiosyn-

cratic mortal, as well as an illuminating intellect, Shelley did not yield his admiration for the sage. One can still see the unbounded astonishment of the poet, which Mary Godwin describes, when she told him her father was annoyed by his addressing him as "Mr." instead of "Esq.," in directing his letters. They got on very well together, however, until Shelley ran away with Mary, — a practical exposition of Godwin's doctrines, which he, having now grown respectable and socially cautious, did not at all relish. Shelley had before this aided Godwin somewhat in financial embarrassments. That philosopher was always in debt; and the young disciple, who, though the heir to a great property, had no way of realizing anything from it except by selling post-obit bonds, agreed with his master that philosophers have a paramount claim on any money their friends might own. He was willing to discharge his duty by getting Godwin out of debt, or assisting him as far as he could in the matter. When he returned to England with Mary he found that the philosopher would not see or forgive him, and positively declined to correspond except upon the subject of how much money

Shelley could give him. Shelley had no thought of not doing his own duty, because of the conduct of other people: and while he felt Godwin's hardness and inconsistency, nevertheless he would relieve that great mind from the little annoyances consequent on borrowing money without providing means of repayment. He, however, was not blind; and what he learned of Godwin in the course of these transactions had a destroying influence upon that ideal of the man which he had formed in his first days of revolutionary hope. In the second year of his life with Mary he told the philosopher what he thought of the whole matter in a letter which one may be excused for reading with peculiar satisfaction: —

"It has perpetually appeared to me to have been your especial duty to see that, so far as mankind value your good opinion, we were dealt justly by, and that a young family, innocent and benevolent and united, should not be confounded with prostitutes and seducers. My astonishment, and, I will confess, when I have been treated with most harshness and cruelty by you, my indignation, has been extreme, that, knowing as you do my nature, any considerations should

have prevailed on you to have been thus harsh and cruel. I lamented also over my ruined hopes of all that your genius once taught me to expect from your virtue, when I found that for yourself, your family, and your creditors you would submit to that communication with me which you once rejected and abhorred, and which no pity for my poverty or sufferings, assumed willingly for you, could avail to extort. Do not talk of *forgiveness* again to me, for my blood boils in my veins, and my gall rises against all that bears the human form, when I think of what I, their benefactor and ardent lover, have endured of enmity and contempt from you and from all mankind."

The writer was that youth of twenty-three years, of whom Godwin remarks that he knew "that Shelley's temper was occasionally fiery, resentful, and indignant." It is true that it was so, and one is pleased to find upon what fit occasions it broke out. Shelley, however, had undertaken a hopeless and endless task in trying to extricate Godwin from debt, and he spent much money, raised at a great sacrifice, in the vain attempt. What he thought of these transactions, when his judgment had matured, we

know from another delightfully plain-spoken letter, written five years later, in answer to renewed importunities: —

"I have given you the amount of a considerable fortune, and have destituted myself, for the purpose of realizing it, of nearly four times the amount. Except for the *good-will* which this transaction seems to have produced between you and me, this money, for any advantage it ever conferred on you, might as well have been thrown into the sea. Had I kept in my own hands this £4,000 or £5,000, and administered it in trust for your permanent advantage, I should indeed have been your benefactor. The error, however, was greater in the man of mature age, extensive experience, and penetrating intellect than in the crude and impetuous boy. Such an error is seldom committed twice."

But long before this, Shelley, though his estimate of Godwin's powers, in common with that of the people of the time, remained extravagant, had found out the difference between the author of Political Justice and Plato and Bacon.

If any one wonders at the extent to which Shelley let himself be fleeced by the philo-

sophical radical of Skinner Street, he should reserve some astonishment for the remainder of the shearers. Shelley, it is to be remembered, was never in possession of his property, and had only a small allowance at first, and a thousand pounds a year after he was twenty-four years old; he was extravagant in his generosity, and gave money with a free hand, whenever he had any, to the poor about him, to his needy friends, and to causes of one kind and another which excited in him his passion for philanthropy. He was, consequently, in his early days, commonly in debt for his own expenses, and often in danger of arrest and imprisonment. When he mentioned his days of poverty, in that letter to Godwin, it was not a mere phrase; and though a settlement was at last made which provided for him sufficiently, he was never ahead in his savings. Under these circumstances, his biography at times reminds one of the old comedy, with its mob of parasites and legacy-hunters. He was simply victimized by those who could establish any claim on his benevolence. No doubt he gave willingly, with all his heart, to Peacock and Leigh Hunt and the rest, as he did to Godwin, and thought it was his duty as

well as his pleasure; but his generosity does not alter the fact that his acquaintances were very dull of conscience in money matters. One begins to relent a little toward Hogg, remembering that he did actually share his own funds with Shelley just after the expulsion from Oxford, when the latter could get no money, owing to his father's displeasure; and for Horace Smith, the banker, who sometimes advanced money to Shelley, and not too much, one has a feeling of amazed respect.

The worst misfortune of Shelley, however, in the friends he made, was to have met and married Harriet Westbrook. The circumstances of their union and its unlucky course and tragical close have lately been for the first time fully set forth. The marriage on Shelley's side was not originally one of love, but it became one of affection. For two years life went on without the discovery of anything to break the happiness of the pair; but after the birth of their first child trouble arose, and rapidly culminated. It is most likely that the sister-in-law, Eliza, who lived with them, was the source of the original dissension by her interference, arbitrariness, and control of Harriet; but, as Shelley had

grown in mind and character, the difference between him and his wife in endowment and in taste was bound to make itself felt, and to put an end to the unity of study and spirit of which he had dreamed; and it is clear enough that she had tired of the studies and the purposes in which Shelley's life consisted, and that though overborne for a time, by his influence, she was now showing herself worldly, frivolous, and weak. She had married the heir to a baronetcy and a fortune, and desired to profit by it. In one way and another she had become hard and unyielding toward Shelley, had made him thoroughly miserable, and, in the earlier months of 1814, was living away from him; and he, on his side, as late as May in that year, as appears from stanzas now first printed, was trying to soften her. While affairs were in this condition he first met Mary Godwin, and he fell passionately in love with her, all the more because of the long strain of dejection and loneliness; and in addition to the story of the dissensions that had arisen in his family, and the difference of character and temperament which had declared itself between his wife and himself, Shelley is said to have told Mary

that Harriet had been unfaithful to him. If he did not tell her then, he did afterwards. On what evidence he relied we do not know; nor is there any confirmatory proof from other quarters except a letter of Godwin's written after Harriet's suicide, in which he states the same fact as coming from unquestionable authority unconnected with Shelley. Not long before his death Shelley renewed the charge, though in a veiled and inferential way, in a letter to Southey, in which he defends himself for his conduct in this matter, declares his innocence of any harm done or intended, refuses to be held responsible for the suicide of Harriet, and practically asserts that he had grounds for divorce, had he chosen to free himself in that way. There is no need to prove that Shelley was right in his belief of his wife's infidelity; but if it be thought that Shelley did in truth believe her guilty, that has much to do with our estimate of his action. He was twenty-two years old, or nearly that, and he held radical views as to the permanence and sacredness of the marriage bond, as also did Mary, who inherited them from her mother. Their decision to unite their lives, under these cir-

cumstances, was a practical admission that Shelley's home was in fact broken up, and that he was free to offer, and Mary to accept, not legal union, but a common home, with the expectation and purpose of complete devotion one to the other, in a pure spirit and for the ordinary ends of marriage.

Shelley did not proceed secretly. He summoned Harriet, who had not thought of such serious results of her action, to London, and told her what he was going to do. She did not consent to the separation, nor does she seem to have regarded it as final. Shelley had a settlement made for her by the lawyers, provided credit for her, and two weeks after the interview left England with Mary. He wrote to Harriet on the journey, assured her of his affection and his care for her, and indulged a plan that she should live near them, which is, perhaps, the most surprising instance of Shelley's purity of mind, and of the unworldliness or unreality, as one chooses to call it, of his conception of how human life might be lived. On his return he saw her, and agreed to leave the children with her; and when his allowance was fixed at a thousand pounds, he gave orders to honor her drafts for two hundred pounds annually.

She had an equal amount from her own family, which had been paid since the beginning of their married life. When Shelley left England the second time, she was thus provided for, one would think, sufficiently. On his return he lost sight of her, and was anxiously inquiring for her, when the news of her suicide reached him. She had put the children, of whom the eldest was three years old, out to board, at a time when he was ill; she had not been permitted to see her father; but the circumstances immediately surrounding her death are not known. Shelley, though he bore his share of natural sorrow for the death of one to whom he had been tenderly attached, did not hold himself guilty of any wrong.

It is no wonder that in the last few years of his life Shelley would not talk of his earlier days, and had a kind of shame in remembering in what ruin his hopes and purposes and the enthusiasm of his youth had fallen; he felt it as an indignity to the nobleness of spirit which, in spite of all his failures, he knew had been his throughout. As we see those years, it is only for himself that we prize them; and it is a pleasure to be enabled to look on them free from that

saddening retrospect of his own mind, and observe how natural and simple he really was. No one has ever had the days of his youth so laid open to the common gaze, and this is one charm of his personality, that we know him as a brother or a friend. The pages afford many happy anecdotes; but one can linger here only to mark the constant playfulness of Shelley, which was a bright element in his earlier career and not altogether absent in his Italian life. The passion for floating paper-boats, which he indulged unweariedly, is well known; but at all times he was ready for sport, and could even trifle with his dearest plans, as in the flotilla of bottles and aerial navy of fire-balloons, all loaded with revolutionary pamphlets, which he sent forth on the Devonshire coast. His running about the little garden, hand in hand with Harriet; his impersonating fabulous monsters with Leigh Hunt's children, who begged him "not to do the horn;" and his favorite sport with his little temporarily adopted Marlow girl, of placing her on the dining-table, and rushing with it across the long room, are instances that readily recur to mind, and illustrate the gayety and high spirits which

really belonged to him, and which perhaps the Serchio last knew when it bore him and his boat on his summer-day voyages. This side of his nature ought to be remembered, as well as that "occasionally fiery, resentful, and indignant" quality which Godwin observed, and the intense and restless practicality of the impatient reformer, when one thinks of Shelley (as he has been too often represented) as only a morbid, sensitive, idealizing poet, of a rather feminine spirit. That portrait of him is untruthful, for he was of a most masculine, active, and naturally joyful nature.

After he left England for the last time, and took up his abode in Italy, principally, it would seem, because of the social reproach and public stigma under which he lived, and by which he felt deeply wronged, he was not really much more fortunate in his company. The immediate reason for the journey was to take Byron's natural daughter, Allegra, to her father at Venice; the mother, Miss Clairmont, went with them, and, as it turned out, continued to be a member of Shelley's family, as she had been since his union with Mary. It is now known that the Shelleys were ignorant of the *lia-*

ison, both when it began in London, and afterward when they first met Byron at Geneva; but Shelley had a warm affection for Miss Clairmont, whose friendlessness appealed to his sympathy, and he spent much time in Italy in trying to make Byron do his duty toward Allegra, and to soften the ill-nature of her parents toward each other. Byron's conduct in this matter was a powerful element in generating in Shelley that thorough contempt he expressed for the former as a man. But though Shelley's most winning qualities are to be observed, and his tact was conspicuously called forth by their negotiations in regard to the child, yet the connection with Miss Clairmont was unfortunate. That it repeatedly drew scandal upon him was a minor matter; it was of more consequence that in his family she was a disturbing element, and Mary, who had disliked to have her as an inmate almost from the first, finally insisted on her withdrawal, but not until frequent disagreements had sadly marred the peace of Shelley's home. Mary, indeed, was not perfect, any more than other very young wives; and by her jealousies, and yet more, it seems, by her attempts to make Shelley conform to the

world, especially in the last year or two, she tried and harassed him; and so it came about that his love took the form of tenderness for her welfare and feelings, and often of despondency for himself. Miss Clairmont was a source of continual trouble for him in many ways: she was of an unhappy temperament and hard to live with; but with his long-enduring and charitable disposition, and his extraordinary tenacity in attachment, and perfect readiness to admit the least obligation upon him, proceeding from any one in trouble, he never wavered in his devotion to her interests and care for her happiness. It is a curious fact that Miss Clairmont, who lived to be very old, manipulated the written records of this portion of her life, so that her evidence is of very questionable worth, though better, one hopes, than that of her mother, the second Mrs. Godwin, whose lying about the Shelleys was of the most wholesale and conscienceless kind.

As with Miss Clairmont, so in a less degree with others of the Italian circle. But enough has been said of the character of the people whom Shelley knew. It cannot be that they cut so poor a figure because of Shelley's presence, hard as the contrast of

common human nature must be with him. It is observable, and it is in some sort a test, that he did not overvalue them. Hogg, Peacock, and Medwin were all deceived, if they thought he trusted them or held them closer than mere friendly acquaintances; there is no evidence that he felt for Williams or Trelawney any more than an affectionate good will; toward Leigh Hunt he had the kindest feeling of gratitude and of respect, and for Gisborne and Reveley a warm cordiality, but nothing more. Mary he loved, though with full knowledge of her weaknesses, in a manly way; for Miss Clairmont he had a true affection; and he recognized poetically a womanly attractiveness in Mrs. Williams, who seems to have represented to him the spirit of restfulness and peace, in the last months of his life. But at the end, his errors respecting men and things being swept away, his ideals removed into the eternal world, and his disillusion complete, the most abiding impression is of the loneliness in which he found himself; and remembering this, one forgets the companions he had upon his journey, and fastens attention more closely upon the man through whose genius that journey has become one of undying memory.

There is no thought of eulogizing him in saying that he represents the ideal of personal and social aspiration, of the love of beauty and of virtue equally, and of the hope of eradicating misery from the world; hence springs in large measure his hold on young hearts, on those who value the spirit above all else and do not confine their recognition of it within too narrow bounds, and on all who are believers in the reform of the world by human agencies. He represents this ideal of aspiration in its most impassioned form; and in his life one reads the saddest history of disillusion. It is because, in the course of this, he abated no whit of his life-long hope, did not change his practice of virtue, and never yielded his perfect faith in the supreme power of love, both in human life and in the universe, that his name has become above all price to those over whom his influence extends. It is, perhaps, more as a man than as a poet merely that he is beloved; the shadows upon his reputation, as one approaches nearer, are burnt away in light; and he is the more honored, the more he is known. For it would be wrong to close even these informal remarks without expressing dissent from the assumption that

Shelley's intellectual and moral life was one long mistake. Disillusion it was, and the nature of it has been indicated by the single point of his acquaintances ; but a life of disillusion and one of mere mistake are not to be confounded together. Better fortune cannot be asked for a youth than that he should conceive life nobly, and, in finding wherein it falls short, should yet not fall short himself of his ideal beyond what may be forgiven to human frailty. Shelley's misconceptions were the conditions of his living the ideal life at all, and differed from those of other youths in face of an untried world only by their moral elevation, passion, and essential nobleness ; he matured as other men do by time and growth and experience, and he suffered much by the peculiar circumstances of his fate ; but in the issue the substance of error in his life was less than it seems. Shelley, at least, never admitted he had been wrong in the essential doctrines of his creed and the motives of his acts, though he had been deceived in regard to human nature and what was possible to it in society.

III. HIS ITALIAN LETTERS.

The prose work of Shelley has remained in the obscurity which it once shared with his poetry. The formal essays, which concern the transitory affairs of the world or themes of thought remote through their generality, are valued, even by admirers of Shelley, mainly as *media* of his spirit: the familiar letters, scattered in old books, or collected only in a costly edition, and deprived of literary effectiveness because those of high and enduring interest have never been selected and massed until recently, have escaped any wide public attention: even the translations have been neglected. All this really large body of prose, however exalted by its informing enthusiasm, however exquisite in language, and melodious, lies outside the open pathways of literature. It is this fact which gave the element of surprise to what Mr. Arnold called his doubt "whether Shelley's delightful Essays and Letters, which deserve to be far more read than they are now, will not resist the wear and tear of time better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry," — a judgment which well deserved Dr. Garnett's quiet rejoinder that

"this deliverance will be weighed by those to whose lot it may fall to determine Mr. Arnold's own place as a critic." Dr. Garnett adds that, in an age when all letters approximate to the ideal set by men of business, Shelley's alone, among those of his time, rank with Gray's, Pope's, Cowper's, or Walpole's in possessing a certain classical impress similar to that of deliberate artistic work; and, secondly, that they exhibit the mind of the poet as clearly as Marlborough's do the mind of the general, or Macaulay's the mind of the man of letters. Their two prime qualities are beauty of form and transparency.

The sense of form has usually been denied to Shelley, and if by it is meant the purely critical impulse to remodel, revise, and polish for the sake of that finish which the schools prize, Shelley neither possessed it nor sought for it with any strong desire, but rather rejected it as dangerously submitting the mind to system, against which he was prejudiced. But if by the sense of form is meant the instinct for proportion, for regulated combination, for natural development of sensation into idea, idea into passion, so that the poem issues in a single harmony in the mind and

heart; if, in other words, by that loose phrase is meant, not the corrective power of the critical, but the shaping power of the creative faculty working out ideal beauty directly, then both in his brief and in much of his longer poems Shelley was singularly distinguished by it. This spontaneous beauty of form, if we may so phrase it, is the only species that is found in these letters: fitness of words, sweetness of cadence, modulation of feeling in immediate response to thought and image, all conspiring to make up perfection of utterance, are continually present, but not through erasure and elaboration. Shelley's self-training in literature, almost unrivaled as an apprenticeship in its length and continuity, more comprehensive, profound, and ardent than Pope's, more vital than Milton's, had made such literary lucidity and grace the habit of his pen, and he was fortunate in employing his gift upon subjects intrinsically most interesting to cultivated men: upon the art and landscape of Italy, or his own always high human relations, or his poetic moods.

In what he says of statues and paintings he shows but slight knowledge of art. The keenness of his perceptions and the warmth

of his feelings made him particularly open to sensuous effects, so that in general he worships the later schools. In painting, especially, he can hardly be considered a safe guide for others, because his praise or censure is largely dependent on his temperament for its justification : a picture which is consonant with his own imagination, and stirs it, is thereby raised and glorified, but one whose theme would have been differently developed by himself is at once made pale by contrast with the quick visions of his own vividly pictorial mind. Here is a portion of his description of a Christ Beatified : —

"The countenance is heavy, as it were, with the rapture of the spirit; the lips parted, but scarcely parted, with the breath of intense but regulated passion; the eyes are calm and benignant; the whole features harmonized in majesty and sweetness."

One cannot but feel that the face which Shelley thus summons up before us bears the same relation to the original as what the dull-minded call his plagiarisms from Lodge do to that poet's lyrics. Shelley often paints the picture over upon the outlines of the old canvas; but this transforming or penetrat-

ing power, as it will be differently named just as one believes the given picture to lack or possess what Shelley saw in it, lends such passages not only surpassing beauty, but a real value as interpretations of art. Much as Ruskin would differ from Shelley's judgments, the two are essentially similar in their mode of treatment, and in their faculty of giving the equivalent of form and color in eloquence.

The description of landscape, which is another principal topic, possesses even more plainly classic beauty. Whether Shelley writes of nature in her wild and picturesque scenes, or where the presence of man has added pathos or dignity to her loveliness; whether he flashes the view upon us in one perfect line, or unfolds it slowly in unconfused detail, he displays the highest power in this field of literature. This view from the Forum of Pompeii, which, instead of being robed with "the gray veil of his own words," seems filled with "the purple noon's transparent light," cannot be surpassed as speech at once familiar and noble: —

"At the upper end, supported on an elevated platform, stands the temple of Jupiter. Under the colonnade of its portico we

sate, and pulled out our oranges, and figs, and bread, and medlars, — sorry fare, you will say, — and rested to eat. Here was a magnificent spectacle. Above and between the multitudinous shafts of the sun-shining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple noon of heaven above it, and supporting, as it were, on its line the dark, lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged toward their summits with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island. To the right was Capreæ, Inarime, Prochyta, and Misenum. Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard subterranean thunder of Vesuvius; its distant, deep peals seemed to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames with the sullen and tremendous sound."

Thus he wrote when merely passive to

nature's influences; but when he begins to think he irradiates the scene; he lifts it with his aspiration and softens it with his regret; he brings it near by reminiscences of the English fields and cliffs and streams; he informs it with the large interests of the intellectual life; and not infrequently he concludes with a passage which, in the arrangement of its images, the sequence of its thought and feeling, the unity of its effect, in all except metrical structure, is a poem. Many paragraphs might be cited which show the character of his genius as directly as do his verses, and which justify the claim advanced for them as having the permanent interest of ideal beauty.

The principal charm of these letters, however, as Dr. Garnett says, is not artistic, but moral. It is not meant to refer by this term to the practical morality of Shelley's deeds, or to his conscientiousness, humanity, self-sacrifice, or other such qualities as they are here displayed; of these there is no longer need to speak. Nor is it meant simply to express the gratification one feels at finding that Shelley, unlike many men of letters who disappoint us by being only common mortals in private life, never falls

below our conception of him, indicative as it is of his purity that his "unpremeditated song" does not fail to reach the height of his great argument. What impresses one most is rather the character of the life itself, of the mind to which "trust in all things high came natural," that moved with equal ease among the things of beauty, on the heights of thought, or amid the common and trivial cares of household life and in the offices of friendship, and knew no difference in the level of his life, so single was his nature and so completely expressed in all he did. In the most ideal passages, in those most impersonal, one does not lose the sense of friendliness in them, of the sweet human relationship which underlies the telling of what he has to say, and keeps the letters in their appropriate sphere. They are not rhapsodies, or soliloquies, or disquisitions; in other words, the visitations of the spirit that came to Shelley, and left record of themselves in this beauty and eloquence and imaginative passion, did not isolate him even momentarily, and could not sever him from his friends. Who these were, we know well enough: Miss Hitchener, the blue-stocking; Hogg, the betrayer;

the Williamses and Gisbornes, who seem to have belonged to the class of people known as satisfying; Peacock, who, with all his nympholepsy, was a born beef-eater; Smith, the obliging; Hunt, the "wren," and Byron, the "eagle," in Shelley's nomenclature, — the too fortunate people who knew Shelley and whom he loved. They formed the environment, which needs to be kept in mind by any who would estimate Shelley's moral power; amid them he lived his high life and made it theirs, in the case of the most, during their communion with him. In a vague analogical way he sometimes brings to mind the Greek gods, who, with all their divine attributes of beauty, power, dignity, were singular among deities for their companionableness; Shelley had that divine quality of being familiar and retaining his original brightness. Toward Byron alone does he show any repulsion; he recognized Byron's admirable qualities, but he was alienated by the latter's selfishness, worldliness, and earthliness, even while he kept terms of amity. Shelley's sentence on Byron is most serious evidence against him, and it is now supported by much that Shelley could not

have known; but it need not be discussed here.

It is especially fortunate that the letters exhibit him after his boyhood, with its false starts, its follies and prejudices, its narrowness and confusion, was passed; of that time we get only a noble echo in his sad remembrance, amid his seeming failure, of the lofty purpose with which he had entered life, while we see the depth unconfused by the tumult of his soul. In these last years, it is true, the thwarting of his practical instinct was ending in hopelessness; but if the earthly paradise that was the faith of his youth was now fading away, he was lifting his eyes to the city in the heavens, and had acknowledged the vanity of seeking the ideal he knew, except in the eternal; he had worked out his salvation. Perhaps after all we do wrong to lament his death; with that tragedy, in which every thought of Shelley involuntarily concludes, his work as a quickener of the spirit was accomplished. More finished works of art he might have given to us; he could not have left a nobler or more enkindling memory. These letters help in the still necessary labor of clearing away

the misconceptions concerning him. In them one sees him only in the quiet of his soul, and will come to a better knowledge and perhaps a higher truth concerning him than is possible by reading his changeful poems alone.

SOME ACTORS' CRITICISMS OF OTHELLO, IAGO, AND SHYLOCK.

An actor of genius, at the moment of impersonating (either in imagination or in fact) a character of Shakespeare's, is probably nearer to the dramatist's creative mood than any one else can get, except possibly the poet born. He may, to use a phrase of Booth's, in speaking of this mode of coming to an understanding of Shakespeare, "hit it" by the mere force within that bears him naturally on. Or, to take the case in which his sympathy with the *rôle* is imperfect, he may perceive wherein he is defective more clearly by his conscious failure than by any analysis. Again, the difficulties that arise from not knowing how Shakespeare put the play on the stage may not be solved rightly, it is true, by the moderns; but the conclusions of the acting fraternity on these matters are much more worthy of weight than those of men unacquainted with the prac-

tical working of that "business" which is a sort of cement for the scenes. Support could be found from many quarters for what Dr. Furness says in behalf of actors as useful critics; but without further reasoning, one may invite attention to some considerations in regard to Othello suggested by quotations from memoirs of the profession and other records, and especially from Booth's annotated acting-copy, extracts from which, although not made with any view to publication, may be found in the Variorum edition of the play.

Mr. White, in his satirical essay upon The Acting of Iago, expresses the opinion that all the modern impersonations are inadequate, and that the fault springs from a radical misconception of the character. Theatrical companies are made up, every one knows, with an actor for each of the varieties of human nature which are usual in a play; so far as character is concerned, they enact types. Iago, of course, falls to the lot of the "heavy villain," whose aim, in stage life, is to do his wickedest always, everywhere, and in as many guises as possible; he is continually pointing to the mark of Cain on his forehead, so that there shall

be no mistake about his identity. "I think," says Booth, — and the criticism holds all the meat of Mr. White's essay in a nutshell, — "the light comedian should play the villain's part, not the 'heavy man;' I mean the Shakespearean villains." In consonance with this is his reiterated advice to his Iago to think evil all the time, but not to show it; to be the prince of good fellows, inexhaustible in *bonhomie*, genial, jovial, gentlemanly, — the friend and pleasant companion whom every one liked, whom Desdemona trifled with, and Cassio respected for his soldiership, and Othello trusted as a man as faithful in love as he was wise in the world. "A certain bluffness," Booth says "(which my temperament does not afford), should be added to preserve the military flavor of the character: in this particular I fail utterly; my Iago lacks the soldierly quality." So far, certainly, Booth does not differ from Mr. White in his conception of the bearing, the outward manner and sensible aspect, of the Venetian liar. Let us look at it from Mr. White's point of view: "Edwin Booth's Iago is not externally a mere hardened villain, but a super-subtle Venetian, who works out his devilish plans with a dexterous light-

ness of touch and smooth sinuosity of movement that suggest the transmigration of a serpent into human form. And in his visage, and, above all, in his eye, burns the venom of his soul. . . . But even Edwin Booth's Iago, although much finer and more nearly consistent with itself and with the facts of the tragedy than any other that is known to the annals of the stage, is not the Iago that Shakespeare drew." But what is it that is lacking? Mr. White paints Iago as the popular flatterer, the sympathetic sycophant, the gay, easy-going, pleased, and pleasing fellow; and, so far as the side shown to the world is concerned, this is Booth's conception, and (allowing for the defect of soldier-like frankness which he feels in himself) it is his impersonation. Why is it not, then, Shakespeare's Iago? Mr. White is ready with his answer: Because Shakespeare's Iago would do no harm, except to advance his fortunes; he had no malice; he was merely selfish, utterly unscrupulous as to his means of obtaining what he sought, ready to win his gain at any ruin. Now, it is clear that the evil which Mr. White has just said burns in the actor's eye is not mere selfishness, not the cold light of

calculation simply, with no more rooted passion ; it is just what Mr. White says Iago did not have,—it is malice. So one gets the hint ; and on searching the remarks of Booth to see what indications there are of his conception of the essence of Iago's soul, the spring of his motive, the changing emotions that enveloped his thoughts at their birth, one perceives at once that, while Booth would have Iago outwardly amiable, he has not the least idea of reducing the dye of villainy in which the character has been steeped by those of old time. Inside, Booth has no doubt, Iago was a spirit of hate, and he knows at what moments of anxious interest, at what crises of the temptation and the plotting, this will gleam out in the expression of the eye, or in those slight tell-tale changes which are natural to the most self-possessed man, and are significant to us only because we are on the watch for them. By observing, consequently, with what passages he connects this devilish malignancy of nature in Iago, one can judge, as between him and Mr. White, what justification he has for making Iago cruel as well as selfish, and revengeful as well as ambitious. Mr. White's theory is that Iago wished to

supplant Cassio, and ruined Desdemona in order to accomplish this end; that he used his suspicion of Othello's intimacy with his wife almost as an after-thought, to bolster up his purpose with an excuse; and that, having chosen his method with perfect indifference to its morality or its humanity, he overreached himself and failed. This view may gain upon one by its plausible and emphatic setting forth, just as pleas for Judas Iscariot or any other client of a clever devil's advocate may do, but only momentarily; for when one attempts to adjust the speeches of Iago, word by word and line by line, to this conception, especially with such notes of direction and caution as these of Booth's to the actor, echoing the text, as they do, through all modulations of suspicion, suspense, and suppressed passion, the idea of an Iago without malice simply dissolves, and leaves not a rack behind. In reality, this new notion of Mr. White's is only the old story that Iago is motiveless, which has disturbed so many critics, and given occasion to such marvelous explanations of his villainy. The disparity between the moral causes and the mortal results, between the errors and the penalties of the victims, has

been widely felt; the attempt is consequently made to ascribe a cause for the catastrophe that shall justify it to the reason; and naturally one writer has over-accented and exaggerated one element in the play, and a second writer another element, and so on; but Mr. White bears away the palm from all in his assertion that Iago did all the mischief just to get on in the world, and that the only reason it was so great was because of the unlimited power for harm in the union of ability to flatter with utter unscrupulousness in a man's make-up. Shakespeare gives the key-note of the action in the very first words Iago utters, unheard except by his own bosom. What was the first thought on his lips then? "I hate the Moor." And perhaps in that most difficult moment of the *rôle*, the climax of Iago's fate, the elder Booth was right in making the expression of this intense enmity dominant in "the Parthian look which Iago, as he was borne off, wounded and in bonds, gave Othello, — a Gorgon stare, in which hate seemed both petrified and petrifying." In this matter the actors seem to carry it over the editor, who, indeed, was in that essay a better social satirist than Shakespearean scholar; and, to

our mind, the conception of Mr. White is too inharmonious, also, with the intellectual power and the delight in its exercise so marked in Shakespeare's and in Booth's Iago.

There is more scope for different interpretations in Othello's case than in Iago's. Othello, it is obvious to any one of the least insight, is a character in whom temperament counts for so much more than anything else as practically to possess the whole man; his actions proceed directly from his nature; his doubts and suspicions act at once upon his heart, and are converted into emotion of the most simple and primitive type almost instantaneously; his mental agony itself tends to become blind physical suffering; he does not think, — he feels. It is in the expression of temperament that the actor is left most free by the dramatist, is least shackled by words, and oftenest relies upon other modes of utterance, among which (we too easily forget) language is only one.

In Othello, consequently, who is the creature of his temperament, the actor influences the character to an unusual degree; and as the range of feeling is from the lowest notes

of tender happiness to the explosions of unlimited despair, the way in which the actor conceives of feeling, his ideas of what makes it noble, and of the manner in which a grand nature would express it, affect the play profoundly. A certain bent has been given to the stage interpretation and also to criticism, by the notion that Shakespeare meant to exhibit in Othello a barbaric passion, the boiling up of a savage nature, the Oriental fervor and rashness, the dæmon of the Moorish race. Yet nothing is plainer in Shakespeare than his utter disregard of historical accuracy; he never depicted a race type, except the Jewish. If Theseus is an Athenian, or Coriolanus or Cæsar himself a Roman, then Othello may be a Moor; but it is most conformable to the facts to regard them all as simply ideal men, who take from their circumstances a color of nationality and a place in time, but who are essentially all of one race. The view of those actors who give Othello a ferocity of emotion because he is a Moor, or of those critics who discern in the violence and brute unreason of some players in this part something to praise on the score of Othello's birth under a hot Mauritanian sun deserves no sympathy. The

Oriental touch in the impersonation ought not to go beyond such slight signs and tokens as the crescent scimiter, — of which Booth says, "It is harmless," — if we are to keep to Shakespeare's art as something better than a costumer's. Othello does not exhibit one extravagance that requires to be excused by the reflection that it is natural to an alien race, though not to the English. But within the limits of the character conceived as merely ideal, there is a fine opportunity for difference among actors, and they have availed themselves of it. To indicate it by a word, Othello's passion seems to have been the cardinal thought of Kean, irresistible, compulsive as "the Pontick Sea," impressive by its main force and elemental sweep; Fechter, whose conception of nobleness of nature was a poor one, sank all the heroic in the melodrama to which the situations lent themselves; and Booth, giving far more distinctness to Othello's suffering, so that his revenge becomes hardly more than an incident in the course of his own soul's torture, reveals the scene of the tragedy at once as in Othello's breast, where the spirit of evil is feeding on a mighty but guileless heart. It is not Desdemona's death that

is the climax, — that is mere pity ; but the tragic element finds its conclusion in Othello's last speech and stroke. The intensity of Kean or the ideality of Booth, working upon the tragic temperament in each, must produce Othello with a difference: one tempts to excess in ferocity, the other in pathos ; but either is consistent with the text. After all, it is with great actors as with poets, — their creations partake of their own nature, in all heroic and ideal parts ; but if, as is thought, sympathy is the best revealer of the inner meaning of works of the imagination, certainly the disciplined and habitual enacting of great *rôles* by actors of genius ought to be a source of light and knowledge regarding them, notwithstanding the allowance that is to be made for the " personal error " of individuality.

It is a striking quality in the immortality of The Merchant of Venice that it has survived a change in the public mind in its attitude toward the Jewish people. To the Elizabethans, and Shakespeare among them, the Jew was hateful. It may well be questioned to what extent Shakespeare himself, with all the tolerance that his understanding

of the springs of human nature gave him, felt the pity in the dramatic situation of Shylock that a modern audience must feel. Booth's conception of Shakespeare's creation is too direct and natural not to justify itself to the student, — "'an inhuman wretch, incapable of pity, void and empty from any dram of mercy.' It has been said that he was an affectionate father and a faithful friend. When, where, and how does he manifest the least claim to such commendation? Tell me that, and unyoke! 'T was the money value of Leah's ring that he grieved over, not its association with her, else he would have shown some affection for her daughter, which he did not or she would not have called her home 'a hell,' robbed and left him. Shakespeare makes her do these un-Hebrew things to intensify the baseness of Shylock's nature. If we side with him in his self-defense, 't is because we have charity, which he had not; if we pity him under the burden of his merited punishment, 't is because we are human, which he is not, except in shape, and even that, I think, should indicate the crookedness of his nature." Booth goes on to justify this traditional conception by an easy argument

against the notion of "the heroic Hebrew," the type of the vengeance of a persecuted race, whose wrongs justify its acts. He refers to the "dangerous 'bit of business'" when Shylock whets his knife. "Would the heroic Hebrew have stooped to such a paltry action? No, never, in the very white-heat of his pursuit of vengeance! But vengeance is foreign to Shylock's thought; 't is revenge he seeks, and he gets just what all who seek it get, — 'sooner or later,' as the saying is."

This characterization is not too vigorous, nor does it go too far. We may find it not only in Shylock as Shakespeare drew him, but reflected also from Antonio. It is in Antonio personally that the attitude of the mediæval Christian toward the Jew is found. The unexplained melancholy of Antonio, his fidelity in high-minded friendship, and the dignity of his bearing under the cruelty to which he is exposed have obscured to us the other side of his character as the Rialto merchant. We see more of Bassanio's Antonio than of Shylock's: the man who had interfered with the usurer in every way and personally maltreated him, and was as like to do the same again; the proud, hard-

hearted, and insulting magnifico whom Shylock hated for himself. Antonio is every whit as heartless to the Jew in the hour of his triumph as Shylock was to him when the balance leaned the other way. His cruelty is lacking only in the physical element; it is not bloody, but it goes to the bone and marrow of Shylock's nature none the less. There is no sign that Shakespeare saw any wrong in all this. It was thus that the Christians looked upon the Jews, and they thought such treatment right. Shakespeare differed from others — from Marlowe, for example, in his delineation of the Jew of Malta — in one point only: he was able to take Shylock's point of view, to understand his motives, to assign the reasons with which revenge justified its own motions; in a word, to represent Shylock's humanity. The speeches he puts into the Jew's mouth are intense and eloquent expressions of the reasoning of that "lodged hate" in his bosom; they are true to fact and to nature; on our ears they come with overwhelming force, and it is impossible to our thoughts that Shakespeare could have written them without sympathy for the wrongs that they set forth with such fiery heat. But when from

this it is argued that Shakespeare, in writing this play, made a deliberate plea for toleration, and carried it as far as the necessities of his plot and the temper of his times permitted, then it is needful to remind ourselves of what Booth calls "the baseness of Shylock's nature." Shakespeare did represent him as base, with avarice, cunning, and revenge for the constituent elements of his character; he did not hesitate to let the exhibition of these low qualities approach the farcical, as he would never have done had he thought of the Jew as in any sense heroic. Shylock had suffered insult and wrong, but there was nothing in him individually to excite commiseration. From beginning to end he shows no noble quality. Modern sympathy with him, apart from the pity that tragedy necessarily stirs, is social sympathy, not personal; it is because he is an outcast and belongs to an outcast race, because every man's hand is against him and against all his people, that the audience of this century perceives an injustice inherent in his position itself, antecedent to, and independent of, any of his acts; and this injustice is ignored in the play. The feeling which Shylock, as a person, excites, and

should excite, is nearer that which Lady Martin describes as her experience: "I have always felt in the acting that my desire to find extenuations for Shylock's race and for himself leaves me, and my heart grows almost as stony as his own. I see his fiendish nature fully revealed. I have seen the knife sharpened to cut quickly through the flesh, the scales brought forward to weigh it; have watched the cruel, eager eyes, all strained and yearning to see the gushing blood welling from the side 'nearest the heart,' and gloating over the fancied agonies and death-pangs of his bitter foe. This man-monster, this pitiless, savage nature, is beyond the pale of humanity; it must be made powerless to hurt. I have felt that with him the wrongs of his race are really as nothing compared with his own remorseless hate. He is no longer the wronged and suffering man; and I longed to pour down on his head the 'justice' he has clamored for, and will exact without pity." Upon this matter Spedding admits of no reply. "The best contribution," he says, "which I can offer to this discussion is the expression of an old man's difficulty in accepting these new discoveries of profound moral and political de-

signs underlying Shakespeare's choice and treatment of his subjects. I believe he was a man of business, — that his principal business was to produce plays which would draw. . . . But if, instead of looking about for a story to 'please' the Globe audience, he had been in search of a subject under cover of which he might steal into their minds 'a more tolerant feeling toward the Hebrew race,' I cannot think he would have selected for his hero a rich Jewish merchant plotting the murder of a Christian rival by means of a fraudulent contract, which made death the penalty of non-payment at the day, and insisting on the exaction of it. In a modern Christian audience it seems to be possible for a skillful actor to work on the feelings of an audience so far as to make a man engaged in such a business an object of respectful sympathy. But can anybody believe that in times when this would have been much more difficult, Shakespeare would have *chosen* such a case as a favorable one to suggest toleration to a public prejudiced against Jews?"

The omnipresent devil's advocate has several times come to Shylock's defense with a legal plea. Those who could find something

to urge in extenuation of Judas Iscariot had an easy task in showing that the Jew of Venice was more sinned against than sinning. The decisions of the young doctor who came armed with the recommendation of the learned Bellario have been overruled in every court of appeal. The bond itself is declared invalid, inasmuch as it contained an immoral proviso in the article that sought Antonio's death; the attempt to defeat it, its validity having once been granted, by denying the right to draw blood and requiring the exact amount of a pound of flesh to be cut out, is characterized as a wretched quibble, and set aside on the ground that a right once allowed carries with it the minor rights to make it effectual; the denial of the original debt for the reason that it had been tendered and refused in open court is declared a gross error, such tender having no other result than to destroy any claim for interest subsequently. But not to mention all the grave reasons alleged to break down the reputation of the Court of Venice and show the illegality of its judgments, it is clear that on legal grounds the case was very badly managed, and in the event the Jew met with no better fortune than was the lot

of his race before an unscrupulous and hostile tribunal everywhere. Nevertheless, the disputants upon the other side, who allege the substantial justice of the decisions rendered, do well to remove the discussion out of the plane of legality. There is much that is weighty in their argument. Shylock must be regarded as standing, after the nature of Judaism, for the law as a thing of the letter; this is the justice which he demands, not real, but literal; and if, by a still more strict interpretation of the letter of the bond than he had thought of, his claim was defeated, the audience will acknowledge the relevancy of the new point that is made, and will enjoy the spectacle of the Biter Bit, in which there is always an element of comic justice. As to the quibble involved, that belongs to the nature of literal interpretation always. Thus the matter is not without defense even on this level. But what really pleases the audience is not the method, but the fact, of the Jew's defeat; and in the fact, however brought about, lies the ethical element, the victory of real over illusory justice, of equity over legality, of the right over the pretense of right. Shakespeare was not expressly philosophical; but

there is little straining of the facts of the case in the view that in the discomfiture of that "law" which the Jew invoked, in the signal defeat inflicted on the letter of the bond, there is a suggestion of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, the literal and the spiritual, the law and that justice with its elements of mercy into which the law develops, which is one of the great phases of historical civilization. Whether Shakespeare put it there is immaterial; but that a modern audience finds it there, and that it was at least dimly present to an Elizabethan audience, is hardly to be questioned. The idea is a simple and ancient one; and in it is to be found whatever ethical meaning the play may have.

But it ought to be always remembered that the primary endowment of Shakespeare was the artistic temperament: he was a poet first, and everything else afterwards. To say this is the same thing with saying — though it must be stated briefly — that the ethical principle in him was a necessity of the imagination, not of the understanding; was vision rather than inference; was a part and not the whole. One can no more imagine life truly without ethics than he can

imagine mass without cohesion; a creative genius, consequently, a man of imagination all compact, does not necessarily start from ethics in moulding his works, but it is more likely that the moral principle which his works must contain as a part of their reality will be secondary and derivative. Shakespeare is ethical because he imagined life truly; he did not imagine life truly because he had thought out, in Lord Bacon's manner, the general principles of morals.

SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT, COLERIDGE, AND WORDSWORTH.

Sir George Beaumont appears to have been one of the most agreeable of men. He had not merely high breeding, but humanity of disposition, delightful companionableness, and the refinement that springs from artistic pursuits. Haydon accuses his manners of a want of moral courage. "What his taste dictated to be right, he would shrink from asserting if it shocked the prejudices of others or put himself to a moment's inconvenience," was the fault that this critic had in mind; but this is only to class him with the men who do not think that the truth is always to be spoken in society, and prefer tact to an aggressive egotism. Sir Humphry Davy notices especially that he was a "remarkably *sensible* man, which I mention because it *is* somewhat remarkable in a painter of genius who is at the same time a man of rank and an exceedingly amusing companion." Southey

was struck by the apparent happiness of his life, and the absence of any reference to afflictions or anxieties that he might have experienced, and says that he "had as little liking for country sports as for public business of any kind," being absorbed by art and nature; and, to add Scott's kind words of him in his diary, that excellent judge writes, "Sir George Beaumont 's dead; by far the most sensible and pleasing man I ever knew. Kind, too, in his nature, and generous, — gentle in society, and of those mild manners which tend to soften the causticity of the general London tone of persiflage and personal satire. I am very sorry — as much as it is in my nature to be — for one whom I could see but seldom." This is a concert of praise which it is a pleasure to associate with the name of the man who was, chiefly, the founder of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square.

He was a friend of the artists of his time, and a patron of Wilkie and Haydon when they needed aid. In the latter's autobiography there is a bright account of a fortnight's visit paid by these two to Coleorton, Sir George's country-seat, which brings the interior life there vividly to the eye, though

it borrows something from the unconscious humor of the narrator, who always fills the scene with himself in the leading part. One pauses to note a characteristic sentence of the incorrigible beggar in which he breaks out with the indignant remark, "All my friends were always advising me what to do instead of advising the Government what to do for me." Sir George, however, had other friends, and most noteworthy of all, Wordsworth, of whom he first heard from Coleridge. Before meeting him, understanding that the two friends wished to live in the same neighborhood, he bought and presented to Wordsworth the little property of Applethwaite near Greta Hall, Coleridge's abode. Wordsworth never used the ground for the purpose for which it was given, but it remained in his possession. From this time, 1803, a close friendship grew up between his family at Grasmere and the one at Coleorton, grounded upon common interests and cemented with mutual exchanges of kindness and regard, so that it survived until the death of Sir George and Lady Beaumont, herself an excellent woman, of whom Crabb Robinson wrote, "She is a gentlewoman of great sweetness and dignity, I

should think among the most interesting persons in the country."

Of the two poets Coleridge was at first more intimate with the Beaumonts. This was in 1803, the period of his illness, just previous to the voyage to Malta. The letters he wrote are very painful to read. The subject is usually the ego; and in reading the apologies of the writer for treating of this ever-present theme, and his observations on his own lack of vanity and the danger he is in of undervaluing his powers and works, one can scarcely fail to be struck by the identity in many respects of the egotism of the overweening and of the self-depreciating kinds. The aspects are different, but the weakness has the same root. In Coleridge it was, perhaps, no more than a question of the state of his stomach whether his assiduous interest in himself should result in intellectual pride or in self-abasement; but without giving too severe a touch, it is clear enough that his eye, when fixed on himself, was on the wrong object.

The letters to the Beaumonts are characterized by this complaining and absorbing egotism of the invalid, unfortified by patience, resolution, or even self-respect. The

ravages of disease in its physical aspects, the laying bare of bodily conditions and symptoms of decay, would be in themselves intolerably disagreeable, but it is much worse to be obliged to attend at the sick-bed of the mind; and in Coleridge's case the internal weakness of the spirit excites the greatest pity, and this feeling nearly passes involuntarily into disgust. The sensibility of his nervous organization was acute. He speaks of times when, as he was accusing himself of insensibility through incapacity to feel, his "whole frame has gone *crush*, as it were." Under the excitement of his emotions, he dissolves in weakness; the spectacle is not a pleasant one; there is something almost ignoble in such loss of self-control. When Wordsworth recited to him, if one can fancy such a thing, the entire thirteen books on the growth of his own mind, in 1807, Coleridge composed a poem, not very coherent or noble, though with personal pathos, in which he says that when he rose from his seat, he "found himself in prayer." It was apparently not an unusual termination to the access of emotion, and it occurred more than once in his relations with the Beaumonts. The mention of it, however, in his corre-

spondence with them, offends one, not in itself, but by the manner of it; indeed, the manner of his earlier letters is indescribable. Their sentiment is so tremulous and overwrought with fever that they resemble maundering; they are "sicklied o'er" with mental disease, and belong to the pathology of genius.

One long epistle, in which he devotes himself to an analysis of his mental condition at the time when he was what is now known as a Social Democrat, shows by an eminent example in what ways the minds of young men of enthusiasm, who have caught the contagion of new ideas, commonly act, and how their tongues are kept going. Coleridge and Southey were rampant young radicals for about ten months, and might many times have been justly thrown into jail for the use of unlawful language and seditiously fomenting the passions of the people. Coleridge ascribes the beginning of his ramblings from the true path of respectable politics partly to his intellectual isolation among his relatives and virtuous acquaintances generally, who thought that his "opinions were the drivel of a babe, but the guilt attached to them, — this was the

gray hair and rigid muscle of inveterate depravity;" and partly, he declares, it was due to the thirst for kindness planted in himself, in that "*me*, who," he says, "from my childhood have had no avarice, no ambition, whose very vanity in my vainest moments was nine tenths of it the desire and delight and necessity of loving and of being beloved," — needs which he found satisfied in the welcome and company of "the Democrats." So he fell among evil companions. On becoming an agitator upon the platform he succumbed to the temptations of the fluent speaker, gifted "with an ebullient fancy, a flowing utterance, a light and dancing heart, and a disposition to catch time by the very rapidity of my own motion, and to speak vehemently from mere verbal associations; choosing sentences and sentiments for the very reason which would have made me recoil with a dying away of the heart and unutterable horror from the actions expressed in such sentiments and sentences, namely, because they were wild and original, and vehement and fantastic." Here is a choice specimen of his eloquence, on the occasion of a supper by some Lord, to commemorate an Austrian victory: "This is a

true Lord's Supper in the communion of darkness! This is a Eucharist of Hell! a sacrament of misery! over each morsel and each drop of which the spirit of some murdered innocent cries aloud to God, This is my body! and this is my blood!" There is one sin against society, however, which he declined to commit, and he took great credit to himself for his obstinate refusal. He joined no party, club, or any of the radical societies, which he characterizes as "ascarides in the bowels of the state, subsisting on the weakness and diseasedness, and having for their final object the death of that state, whose life had been their birth and growth, and continued to be their sole nourishment." He remained outside of these entangling alliances, a free-lance speechifier, in the condition of mind of the willing martyr: "The very clank of the chains that were to be put about my limbs would not at that time have deterred me from a strong phrase or striking metaphor, although I had had no other inducement to the use of the same except the wantonness of luxuriant imgination, and my aversion to abstain from anything simply because it was dangerous." Such was Coleridge at twenty-four years, —

the age at which Emmett was executed; whose death called out this long letter of reminiscences concerning his own career as an agitator, and of reflections upon the impulses and justification of revolutionary orators, their tempations, errors, and illusions. He understood the fate of Emmett with greater clearness because of this little episode in his own life, and it is noticeable that he has the grace not to think that the young patriot's career bore too much resemblance to his own; but this confession of his foolishness in general, spread out somewhat magniloquently before the eyes of his aristocratic correspondent, is a lesson in human nature well worth a moment's attention from conservative and orderly people.

Coleridge's career — if a brief digression may be pardoned here — was only too much in keeping with the temperament of these letters to the Beaumonts. Wherever one comes upon it in the memoirs of the time, the story is the same. Soften it as we may, that career was one of those, too frequent among men of letters, that can never be told, so marred by disease and by moral feebleness, so full of shame and supineness and waste, that it must be kept out of sight.

During the years of his maturity he was a broken man, and knew himself to be such; from the time that, in becoming the victim of opium, he lost what little will-power was originally his, he felt that the spirit of imagination had left his house of life, and in its place was henceforward

> "Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
> And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;"

and in this mood of pervading despondency he seems always in fancy to be haunting the grave of his dead self. This consciousness of his loss, though it had more of the stupor of despair than of the sharpness of penitence, lends some impressiveness to his story; but this pain was not searching enough to save him for himself, nor of a kind to make men oblivious of those violent contrasts in his life which offend our sense of rightness. It is a morally confusing spectacle to see genius professing the highest knowledge of the secret things of God, but itself wrecked; and it requires something more than the poet's sorrow at the withering of his wreath to reconcile such an antithesis.

Then, too, although Coleridge's poetic imagination undoubtedly was quenched at once,

or gave out only brief and random flashes in his manhood, it may well be questioned whether the waste of his faculties was not due quite as much to mismanagement of the mind as to the palsying of his powers of effort, purpose, or orderly reduction of thought. He lived in the period of universal philosophers, and in his study of metaphysics and theology in Germany he must have fixed in his mind the habit of including the *omne scibile* in his system. This was the more easy for him, as he had in unusual proportion that false comprehensiveness which seizes on knowledge, not by all its relations as it stands in the body of science, but by some particular relation which it may seem to bear, truly or untruly, to some preconceived idea that has been taken as the organizing principle of the new scheme. It is because of their common participation in this method that poetry and philosophy, in the old sense, approach so much nearer each other than either does to science. It is plain to any one who reads the topics of Coleridge's discourses that his mind ranged through a vast circuit of knowledge habitually, but also that it touched the facts only at single points and superficially; in other

words, he displays compass rather than grasp. In dealing with the mass of his learning, he showed no lack of systematizing power, though it may easily be believed that in conversation with chance visitors the fine filaments of logical connection escaped their sight. The trouble was in the original mode of elaborating the system — the old Greek way of philosophizing by subtle manipulation of analogies, convenient facts, half-understood harmonies of this with that, arbitrary constructions, with now and then a dead plunge into the unfathomable. To borrow Coleridge's own distinction, this procedure is to logic what fancy is to the imagination — a freak of the mind partly out of relation to the truth of things. It is a modern form of scholasticism.

Coleridge, however, whose speculative powers were thus employed, is believed to have been a great light to those who had eyes to see. What particular truth Maurice and others derived from him is, nevertheless, not evident. He shared the awakening power that idealists possess, generally in proportion to their consistency and the intensity of their personal conviction. Idealism, by the very fact that it is an enfranchisement from

sense, is a tonic to the mind: it quickens the activity of thought and facilitates its processes because it assumes the mastery of the universe, and makes reality pliable to its hand. This may or may not be lawful, but it generates a feeling of command and of liberty highly favorable to spiritual development. To some men impressionable on that side of their nature Coleridge was the giver of this freedom, and this has been the case especially with members of the clergy who are closely attached to theological dogma. Such persons found in Coleridge's mind the rare and curious coexistence of fixed dogma with incessant speculation: he afforded the sense of untrammeled investigation without once disturbing the certainty of the prejudged cause. This phantom of liberalism was a very quieting tutelar genius to some educated men, who thus kept up a semblance of thinking; but influence of this sort is necessarily transitory. His Scriptural renderings of philosophy give place to those of other theologians, who rationalize on new grounds of scientific knowledge instead of German metaphysics, while the stimulation that was furnished by his idealism may be more simply and directly derived from less

involved and abstruse thinkers. His theology and metaphysics, in pursuit of which he wasted his powers, are already seen to be transient. On the other hand, his criticism has articulated the works of minor authors who have themselves written in a formal style, nor has its influence been harmed by its frequent over-refinement and fancifulness; and his poetry has remained untouched by time. It belongs to the period of his early enthusiasm, before he had become too dulled for the breath of inspiration to kindle him; and fortunately one can read nearly all the best of it without a thought of the dreary after-life of the poet, which has no vital interest to any one except as an illustration of prolonged failure due to many causes, but not less to a lack of mental than of moral self-government. He infiltrated a peculiar intellectual life into the clergy of his time, but in them it came to nothing more tangible and permanent than in himself. Will it be long before Carlyle's picture of the Seer at Highgate will be the only supplement to The Ancient Mariner, so far as the general knowledge of Coleridge is concerned, and all between nothing but the weariness of the opium-eater's hiding?

Perhaps the serenity of Wordsworth's home at Grasmere gains by the miserable contrast. Thither Coleridge came for invigoration; thither, when he finally separated from his wife, he brought or sent the children; and when he could not or would not retire to the hospitality and pleasant companionship of the household where he found the feminine sympathy which he had failed of in his own marriage, Wordsworth would set out to visit him with moral support and cheer. A different interest united Wordsworth and Sir George Beaumont; it was the love of nature. Landscape was the subject of their thoughts. Sir George painted it, Wordsworth poetized it; in the life of both it was a permanent resource to which they constantly resorted, and they liked to blend their work in this solvent — the pictures of the one becoming a text for the poems of the other, and *vice versa*. The interest Wordsworth felt in landscape gardening, in modifying wild nature, and his ideas regarding the methods and aims of the art, are brought out by the part he had in planning the grounds at Coleorton. Sir George rebuilt these, and, in laying out the winter garden in particular,

he had frequent recourse to the taste of his friend; and as Wordsworth was that year occupying the old farmhouse on the estate, the business of thinking out and overseeing this work was at once diversion and restful employment amid his poetic labors. He wrote at great length on the subject to Lady Beaumont, and laid before her an elaborate plain full of ivy, holly, juniper, yews, open sunshine glades, flower-borders, an alley, a bower, a spray-fountain, a quarry, a distant spire, a pool with two gold-fish, a vine-clad old cottage, and other things which are artificial enough in the reading, but in reality seem remarkably well fitted to mingle the charm of cultivation with the wildness of the evergreens, and make a sheltering retreat where the life of nature would linger longest in autumn and revive earliest in the warm sun.

"Painters and poets," he wrote, "have had the credit of being reckoned the fathers of English gardening," and he felt thus in the line of succession in the art. It is most interesting to observe how he obtains suggestions from the poets, and makes their Pegasus plough his field. He was, of course, opposed to undue interference with nature

and the deformity it occasions, and also to the ostentation of the wealth or station of the owner. "It is a substitution of little things for great when we would put a whole country into a nobleman's livery," he says with spirit, and, declaring that the laying out of grounds is a liberal art not unlike poetry and painting, he goes on to protest against the monopoly of nature by the great ones of the earth, upon high æsthetic grounds. "No liberal art," he says, "aims merely at the gratification of an individual or a class; the painter or poet is degraded in proportion as he does so. . . . If this be so when we are merely putting together words or colors, how much more ought the feeling to prevail when we are in the midst of the realities of things. . . . What, then, shall we say of many great mansions with their unqualified expulsion of human creatures from their neighborhood, happy or not — houses which do what is fabled of the upas tree — that they breathe out death and desolation?" These strictures on the aristocratic handling of land he continues for some pages in an interesting advocacy of æsthetic communism — still a suggestive topic. This sense of the beauty and gran-

deur of nature as a universal boon, the desire to humanize the landscape without robbing it of its own essential character or of the minor charms of its native wildness, and a great delight in his own practical work of improving rubbish heaps, old walls, and broken ground into a winter retreat of sunshine and evergreens and red-berried vines, with nooks and views fit for a poet's walk, are the qualities that still give interest to those half dozen letters about planting a waste acre of land. On the other hand, his genius, in which susceptibility to nature was so dominating a principle, seldom finds expression in the prose of his letters with nearly the same clearness and purity as in his poems. There is one extract, however, which must be given, of a city scene from the country poet: —

"I left Coleridge at seven o'clock on Sunday morning and walked towards the city in a very thoughtful and melancholy state of mind. I had passed through Temple Bar and by St. Dunstan's, noticing nothing, and entirely occupied with my own thoughts, when, looking up, I saw before me the avenue of Fleet Street, silent, empty, and pure white, with a sprinkling of new-fallen snow,

not a cart or a carriage to obstruct the view, no noise, only a few soundless and dusky foot-passengers here and there. You remember the elegant line of the curve of Ludgate Hill in which the avenue would terminate, and beyond, and towering above it, was the huge and majestic form of St. Paul's, solemnized by a thin veil of falling snow. I cannot say how much I was affected at this unthought-of sight in such a place, and what a blessing I felt there is in habits of exalted imagination. My sorrow was controlled, and my uneasiness of mind — not quieted and relieved altogether — seemed at once to receive the gift of an anchor of security."

This is not poetry, but it is from the same pen as the sonnet on Westminster Bridge.

Besides this taste for landscape, a special interest was taken by both friends in what poetry Wordsworth was composing from time to time. Wordsworth again expatiates on the "awful truth that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world," that is, in society; and again defines his aims, "to console the

afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore become, more actively and securely virtuous," etc. Here, too, are the calm and patient confidence in his own immortality, a serene foreknowledge of how the matter would end, though there are some dark spots in his prevision, as when he says that "the people would love Peter Bell" if only the critics would let them. It appears, too, that these poets were discreet in their confidential criticism of each other, and by no means blind to faults. Wordsworth notices that in Southey's verse, notwithstanding picturesqueness and romance and a minor touch or two, "there is nothing that shows the hand of the great master;" and Coleridge, with all his adoration for Wordsworth, even when declaring that he regarded the tale of the ruined cottage in the Excursion as "the finest poem in our language, comparing it with any of the same or similar length," could yet put his finger on the very centre of weakness in Wordsworth. "I have sometimes fancied," he says, "that, having by the conjoint operation of his own experiences,

feelings, and reason *himself* convinced *himself* of truths which the generality of people have either taken for granted from their infancy, or at least adopted in early life, he has attached all their own depth and weight to doctrines and words which come almost as truisms or commonplace to others."

Wordsworth's last words are a farewell; they illustrate how the love of nature and enjoyment of it, unlike most of youthful emotions, gain an increasing glow with years, and they express his faith and life in the most elementary terms: "I never had a higher relish for the beauties of nature than during this spring, nor enjoyed myself more. What manifold reason, my dear George, have you and I had to be thankful to Providence! Theologians may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will; the religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure, and gratitude is the handmaid to hope, and hope the harbinger of faith. I look abroad upon nature, I think of the best part of our species, I lean upon my friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of St. John; and my creed rises up of itself with the ease of an exhalation, yet a fabric of adamant. God bless you, my ever dear friend."

THREE MEN OF PIETY

I. BUNYAN.

THE word genius is often used to conceal a puzzle which the critic, through defects of analytic power or sympathetic insight, is unable to solve; but perhaps this short and easy method was never more feebly resorted to than when a writer, with a strong prejudice in favor of sweetness and light, described Bunyan as a "Philistine of genius." In this designation there is much darkness and some acerbity. The wonderful thing about this man was not so much his gifts as the strange combination of them. There must be, of course, something extraordinary in any common man who becomes a leader in the higher life of the race. The history of the Church, however, is starred with the names of the ignorant and the humble who, since the fishermen were called from their nets by Galilee, have been chosen to be shepherds of the flock and evangelists of the faith. Bunyan was visited with the experience of Protes-

tant Christendom, of which the successive terms are an outraged conscience, an offended God, and a miraculous pardon, and when he came to his peace he spread the glad news, acceptably to the pious, and convincingly to the impenitent; but tens of thousands in Christian lands have passed through that same strait gate, and hundreds of them have discovered that they possessed the gift of tongues. Had Bunyan done no more his sermons would have turned to yellow dust long ago, and his memory would be treasured only by a sect, for, eloquent as he was, he was not one of the missionaries who are world-famous. He wrote a book; and it turned out that this book of an uneducated man was a great literary classic. Had he written an epic it would have seemed less marvelous, because there is a popular superstition that nature makes poets, but in prose does not enter into competition with the common school. Bunyan wrote verses, it is true, and the man who set the delectable mountains on the rim of earth had the magical sight; but just as surely his doggerel shows that he had not the singing voice. He was a master of prose, and wrote a book that neighbors the Bible in our religious homes.

Two things are, of course, indispensable to a boy of genius, — imagination and the gift of expression. Now Bunyan was fond of representing himself as very wicked in youth; and so he was, from his own point of view. The worst he can say for himself is, that he lied and swore, without malice or injury to others, but because he had a talent for tales and oaths. It is not trifling to remark that his powers of invention and forcible Saxon speech appear to have found their first channel in this sort of mental activity. The possible openings for the development of genius in the tinker's cottage at Bedford were few. It is plain that the mind of the young man was one of intense life, and, in the lack of guidance and knowledge, wandered at random or turned to feed upon itself. The only intellectual or moral ideas that came to him were conveyed from the Bible, mostly through the medium of the parish church in the years of the Puritan ascendency. The commonplace that the Bible affords a good education, especially on the imaginative and moral sides, is true, and the theology that attaches to it has developed strong intellects; it was, in the end, the total book-culture of Bunyan, — all that

he knew of that vast and various world. But in the primary classes it is not a simple text-book of life, especially for a boy of genius who is all sense, all spirit. Bunyan in after years did not regret his first lessons; he preached that children should be taught the terrors of the law. Certainly his own mind laid hold of the easily apprehended images of threatened vengeance, and was filled with vague alarm and driven to a torturing scrutiny of his own spirit. The experience of conversion repeats in the individual the religious history of the race in the same order in which it is developed in the evolution of Biblical thought itself, and Bunyan's case was not substantially different from that of others, Puritan or Catholic, to whom there is no Calvary without a Sinai. The peculiarity lay in the soil into which this fiery seed was sown. His imagination ceased its childish fabling and became visionary; he saw, as the eye sometimes will, his mind-pictures, and this the more readily because his uneducated mind was accustomed to move through concrete ideas, and hence would be characterized by a high visualizing power. That this was a marked trait of his mental habit is shown by the

fact that all his stories about himself are localized in a distinctly remembered place.

At this stage his mind approached the danger-line of religious madness: his descriptions of his moods, of his despairs, and of his struggles with fancies, whose importance to his intellectual life arose from the fewness of his ideas and the limited field of their play, show that he had no power over his thoughts, that he had not learned to use his will in thinking. This objectivity of his religious experience and his powerlessness before it, which have been recorded of other intense lives likewise, gave him a strong sense of the reality of spiritual things; and when he at last had laid his doubts and come into the calm, he kept this conviction to such a degree that earthly matters, even when religion was largely interested in politics, seemed of no consequence: this world was the dream, and the next world the truth. To our days the account of this conversion seems to indicate a lack of sanity, a spirit touched with the fever that ends in fanaticism; but we may be sure that to his hearers there was nothing incredible in it, nothing that could not be paralleled out of what they had known in themselves or heard from

their neighbors. So, early in life, the plot of his career was brought to its crisis. In this faith in the reality of eternal things his mind reached its growth, and afterward knew no change.

But with this sure hold on the spirit and its high concerns there went a perfect realism. Bunyan was the opposite of a mystic. His common sense in his sermons of advice is extraordinarily close-packed and hard, and exhibits acute observation of the ways of human nature in practical life. He wrote once what was almost a novel, a history of one Mr. Badman, which is probably truer to contemporary life than the adventures of Jonathan Wild in the next century. If he did not weaken his eyesight over books, he sharpened it on men and women. All his volumes abound with anecdotes and incidents which he had evidently seen in the town streets or by the roadside, and with phrases and proverbial sayings close to the soil. Not the least agreeable of the signs of this realism, this sight for the bare fact in sense alone, are those descriptions of the country, of the birds, and flowers, and fields, and the simple cheerfulness of them to the country-born boy, which strew his pages from

cover to cover. So, when he came to write his great book, he united in a perfectly natural way, and without forethought, the reality of a journey on earth with that of the search for heaven. The success with which, in a literary work, truth is fused with fact, is a measure of genius. It is, perhaps, more striking in this case because the work is an allegory, which is usually so drearily pale a kind of composition. The characters and action of the Pilgrim's Progress, on the contrary, are a transcript of life, so vivid that it cannot wear out. It is not more realistic, however, than other portions of Bunyan's voluminous writings, in which one may get an idea of English provincial character of high historical value and human interest. How close, how truthful to his surroundings he was as a literary workman, is brought home with great force, though perhaps unconsciously, by the view which his biography gives of Bedford things and people.

From it one may reconstruct the religious state of the poor people of the Lincoln diocese in Bunyan's time, and bring very near the look of the lowly life which was the original soil of English dissent and the field

of the tinker-preacher's labors. In reading terse extracts from the old documents — "short and simple annals of the poor," truly — of prayers in the barn and fines in the court-house, of levies on workmen's tools and old women's chattels, of these families of "the meanest sort," as the Bishop's schedule calls them, whose petty share of poverty was confiscated for the security of a Stuart throne and an Anglican prayer-book, — in reading of these things, a chapter of the history of the English people comes out which has been too closely written over with the wit and frolic of Charles's court; and the query as to what became of the Commonwealth when Cromwell died does not seem so wholly unanswerable as the silence of standard history on the point would indicate.

After all, one is almost inclined to say that no man ever owed more than Bunyan to his limitations. Within his bounds, he used all his spiritual and earthly experience, and, aided by a native gift of imagination and of fluency in the people's speech, blended them, and poured the full fountain of his life through his books. Had his youth included other powerful elements of emotion and knowledge besides his conversion, had theol-

ogy, or learning, or wider duties removed him somewhat more from the life of his neighbors and friends and the folk of the diocese, of which he was jestingly called the "bishop," he might have found so complete self-expression a more difficult task. As it was, he told all he had to tell, — told the highest truth in the commonest words and made it current. It is curious to observe that he exhibits no consciousness that he is writing a great work; he speaks of a rush of thought and fancy, and an attractiveness in the subject, but he does not seem to think that he is doing more than adding another to the two-score publications he has already sent out. It is noticeable, too, that he did not meditate upon it for years beforehand, nor spend more than a few months in its composition. Some passages were added at a later time, but as a whole it was a spontaneous and rapid composition. The reason is that he was ripe for it. Without knowing it, he had been working up to this crowning book, both in thought, treatment, and style, through many years of sincere and straightforward, face-to-face conversation with men and women whom he was endeavoring to guide in the way which he

had traveled. Pilgrim's Progress has been called the last book that was written without the fear of the reviewer: it is of more consequence that it is one of the few works that have been composed without ambition.

Bunyan's memory is singularly agreeable. Personally he was free from the defects of assumption, dogmatism, and spiritual pride, which entered largely into the religious character of his epoch, and his sensitive conscience seems to have kept him humble after he had won a name. The two great elements of his work — the homely quality and the Christian quality — were deep-seated in his nature, and give him charm. In an age of sectaries he was not a narrow bigot, and did not stickle for meaningless things; and in a time of political strife, growing out of religious differences, and though himself a sufferer by twelve years' imprisonment in early manhood, he did not confuse heaven with any fantastic monarchy or commonwealth of Christ in London, nor show any rancor or revengeful spirit as a subject. It is worth remembering that out of Puritanism, which is regarded as a narrow creed and life, came the only book since the Reformation which has been acceptable to the

whole of Christendom, and is still regarded as the substantial truth of the Christian life in all the churches that preach it under any creed of orthodoxy. The life of the man who could evolve such a story must have been very simply typical of the Christian life itself. "A Philistine of genius" — is there no light nor sweetness in this?

II. COWPER.

The career of Cowper, as all the world knows, was one to fill the pessimist with perennial gladness; and, in fact, if it were possible to look at the natural order of things only as Cowper was affected thereby, it might seem that nothing short of malignity in the overruling powers could account for the fiat that gave up so pure, simple, and cordial a nature to be the prey of the seven devils, and rendered so many delightful traits of character futile to achieve the happiness of their unfortunate possessor. In his letters, flowing on in the old, sweet, fresh English, one perceives the rare literary faculty, the shy humor, the discrimination, the sound sense, all the many graces of style and many virtues of intrinsic worth, that have long been familiar to scholars; and,

more than that, one gladly recognizes again the companionable, soft-hearted, pathetic man whose pastimes, whether in gardening, or poetry, or caring for his pets, were a refuge from the most poignant anguish; who played only to escape his terror, and at last failed even in that. The piety of Cowper's life, however, although it contributes to his poetic attractiveness, is only a small part of what must be dealt with by the observer of that life as it appears in his familiar letters. These, as a body, it is needless to say, hold a place from which they are not likely to be dislodged. Nevertheless, letters at the best are not a high form of literature; even when, as in the present case, their workmanship entitles them to rank as classics, their interest must finally reside in their being unconscious autobiography rather than in their artistic perfection. Hence, instead of regarding this correspondence as an object of literary *virtu*, it may be well for once to consider it with a more direct reference to the sober facts it chronicles and the spirit it reveals.

Few persons experienced in the world would be likely to hold up the routine of Cowper's days as worthy of imitation. So

far as earthly matters were involved, it was a life of very small things; its mundane interests were few and trivial, and sprang for the most part out of pursuits that belong usually either to the domain of childhood or of invalidism. This is not said disparagingly, but with due regard to the fact that for the larger part of his career Cowper's condition was such that his attention had to be distracted and his mind amused, as is the case with children or invalids. In his later years the composition of verses became one mode of such diversion, and was undertaken practically as a sanitary measure; and thus his larger interests, involving conceptions of the eternal world and sympathy with his fellow-men, were extended to his hours of recreation. These larger interests, as they must be called, were from the first peculiar. When he was not attending to his hares or his vegetables, or versifying, or taking rural walks, he was engaged in devotional exercises of one kind or another. In 1766, for example, every day the time from breakfast until eleven o'clock was spent in reading the Bible or sermons, or in religious conversation; the hour from eleven to twelve was passed in church at service; in the course of

the afternoon there was a second period of religious conversation or hymn-singing; at night there was commonly another sermon and more psalms, and after that family prayers. In other words, it appears that Cowper's life, at that time at least (and it is a fair sample of the whole), consisted of an almost monastic religious routine, relieved by the diversion of country pursuits on a small scale, and, later, of literary pursuits in addition. At present, as has been said, few qualified judges would consider this a life of high order, either in the way of wisdom or utility; but in Cowper's case, the peculiarity of his mental condition and the charm of his nature, revealed at its happy moments in pleasant letters, blind the reader to the monotony and vapidity of this existence, for such were its characteristics, except in so far as the healing influences of natural scenes, to which Cowper was very sensitive, and the kindness of his household friends, gave it variety and substance.

Now, it is a very striking fact that while Cowper spent the larger part of his time in religious reading and conversation, and besides meditated in private on the same themes, his letters do not show in any degree

that insight into spiritual things which would naturally be looked for from real genius occupied with such subjects. Spirituality should have been his trait if religion was his life, but, in fact, these letters are in this regard barren. The anomalous nature of his poetic life — the fact that he used his powers, not to express his deepest emotions, but to escape from them — may be pleaded in extenuation of what seems at first a surprising defect; but a more likely explanation lies in another direction. It was sermons that he read, theology that he talked about, a theory of grace and salvation that he meditated upon in secret; his religion occupied his thoughts rather than his acts, touched his future rather than his present, — in a word, it was a system rather than a life, the source of doubt instead of inspiration. To put it in the simplest form, he derived his light, not from his own inner experience, but from the creed. In his case the light was the darkness of insanity; but his own conviction in the matter is shown in his characterization of Beattie, — "a man whose faculties have now and then a glimpse from Heaven upon them, a man not indeed in possession of much evangelical light, but

faithful to what he has, and never neglecting an opportunity to use it." A poet who identifies "evangelical light" with "the vision and the faculty divine" may write The Castaway, but one is not likely to find in his works those intimate revelations of truth that flash in convincing beauty from the lines of the true spiritualists, such as Wordsworth, Shelley, or Emerson. Cowper's misfortune, both as a man and a poet, was this substitution of dogma for instinct, which, operating in so sensitive and feeble a nature, made religion, which was his vital interest, not a life but a disease, and gave to the activities of his higher powers the character of mania. It is misleading, therefore, to think of these letters as the fruit of a deeply religious mind; they are the record of the efforts of a creed-believing mind to get rid of itself, and their virtues — their amiability, their delight in small adventures, their interest in literature and humanity — exist not in consequence of but in spite of the religious bent of their author.

Cowper was deficient, too, æsthetically as well as spiritually, and the character of his limitations was much the same in both respects. His sense of beauty was practically

confined to landscape and small animals. The cramping influences amid which he lived are well indicated by his remarks upon a clergyman who, it should be said, richly deserved censure: —

"He seems, together with others of our acquaintance, to have suffered considerably in his spiritual character by his attachment to music. The lawfulness of it, when used with moderation, and in its proper place, is unquestionable; but I believe that wine itself, though a man be guilty of habitual intoxication, does not more debauch and befool the natural understanding than music — always music, music in season and out of season — weakens and destroys the spiritual discernment. If it is not used with an unfeigned reference to the worship of God, and with a design to assist the soul in the performance of it, which cannot be the case when it is the only occupation, it degenerates into a sensual delight, and becomes a most powerful advocate for the admission of other pleasures, grosser, perhaps, in degree, but in their kind the same."

Whatever truth there may be in this estimate of the influence of music, the limitation of its use to church choirs and organs

is an expression of Puritan iconoclasm which acquaints the reader at once with Cowper's provincialism. The passage is English to the core, and not only does it suggest the æsthetic deficiencies of the poet and his life, but it also brings up once more the characteristic English picture of the family singing psalms and reading sermons, year in, year out, with which the letters begin. This correspondence has made that group of interest to the world; but in answer to the question, What was its life and its spirit, can one help feeling that trivial, not to say belittling, occupations, and a narrowing theology, were principal elements? Cowper's work, in the main, has only the sluggish vitality of this life; in his letters more than in his verses, speaking generally, there is literary grace and personal charm; but in both they seem a sort of salvage. A vision of quiet green fields, inhabited by respectable gentlefolk who led an existence of humble routine in a neighborly way, made up Cowper's world; he lived in it overshadowed by the ever present fear of damnation, and at last, sunk in despair, he died in it. Out of such a world no great poet either of the soul or of nature could come.

Cowper's virtue was in his simplicity and genuineness, rare qualities then; his good fortune was in never belonging to the literary set or bowing to the town taste; hence in a time the most barren in English literature, he gave us a half dozen fine poems that stand far beyond all contemporary rivalry, and some private letters of the best style and temper. When, however, the question comes as to the intrinsic value of these letters, it must be confessed that though they please the taste they do not interest the mind except in a curious and diverting way. They are less the letters of a poet than of a village original, a sort of schoolmaster or clergyman *manqué*, of sound sense, tender heart, and humane perception, but the creature of a narrow sphere.

III. CHANNING.

Channing was the chief ornament of the American pulpit in his day. Like nearly all men illustrious in the religious life, he has won a kindlier and wider regard by his character than by his opinions, because the moods of devotion are simple and are universal in human nature, while opinion in theology is more variable and eccentric, and

in some degree more accidental, than in any other branch of speculation. The deepest interest of his life lies not so much in the fruit of his genius as in the light of his spirit. Indeed, this acknowledgment is wrapped up in the indiscriminate eulogy by which his admirers have injured his fame, for they have presented him as a saint rather than as a thinker, as an example of ideal living rather than as a finder of truth. To put a man in the catalogue of saints is merely to write his epitaph; his life is the main thing, and Channing, although his biography records no great deeds in the world and no great crises of inner experience, is not alone in being far more interesting in his humanity than in his canonization. A refined and sensitive childhood, shadowed in some partially explained way, so that he never remembered it as a period of joyfulness, was followed by a spirited and dreaming youth, caught by the fervors of French revolutionary ideas and exalted by its own noble motives. In those early years, as well as in his late maturity, he experienced, on the beach at Newport and under the willows at Cambridge, moments of insight and impulse which stood out ever after

in his memory as new births of the spirit prophetic of the future. His career was especially determined, however, by the twenty-one months which he passed at Richmond as a private tutor, immediately after leaving college. There, in loneliness and poverty, in stoical disregard of health and courting privation, in Christian conscientiousness of motive, led on by glowing reveries in which visionary objects seemed realities within reach, he devoted himself in written words to the service of mankind by the instrumentalities of religion. It is painful to read the narrative of this intense personal life in the years most susceptible to enthusiasm for remote and ideal ends; there can be no wonder that after such experience he returned home with the seal of the religious life set upon his soul, and with a body inexorably condemned to life-long disease. He entered upon his ministry in the field where he could best do good and find peace in doing it; morally the child of the New England religious spirit, and intellectually the disciple of those ideas of the nature of humanity and the right course of its development which the French Revolution had disseminated. Throughout his life he was governed mainly

by a deep sense of the dignity of manhood, under whatever form, and by an abiding conviction of the aid which Christianity gives to the imagination and heart in obeying the rule of love and obtaining permanent peace of mind.

The most acute criticism ever passed upon Channing's character was by that unnamed critic who said, "He was kept from the highest goodness by his love of rectitude." The love of rectitude was his predominant trait; he was enslaved by it. He exacted more of himself, however, than of others. Right he must be, at all hazards, in motive, opinion, and action. It is melancholy to read page after page of his self-examination, so minute, intricate, and painful, so frequent and long continued. It almost awakens a doubt of the value of noble character to find it so unsure of itself, to see its possessor so absorbed in hunting his own shadow within the innermost retreats of thought and feeling. Channing seems to have preached more sermons to himself than to the world. His love of rectitude led him to this excessive conscientiousness, but it brought him great good in other directions. It gave him a respect for the opinions of other men as

catholic as it was humble. He did not practice toleration toward them, for that expression implied to his mind a misplaced self-confidence; but he practiced charity, as toward men who felt equally with himself the binding force of the obligation to be right, and who had an equal chance of finding truth. His conviction of the universality of this obligation and his perception that it necessitates the independent exercise of individual powers encouraged in him a remarkable admiration for individuality, for the unhampered exercise of thought and unquestioned obedience to motive in which the richness of individual life consists.

His second great quality, as pervasive and controlling as his desire to be right, was sensibility. It was revealed in the sympathies and affections of private life, which are known to the world only by the report of friends; but it may be seen with equal clearness in the intensity of his delight in nature, and in the ardent feeling by which he realized ideal ends and gave them a living presence in his own life as objects of continuous effort. His sensitiveness to natural beauty was so keen that in moments of physical weakness it caused pain. "There

are times," he wrote, "when I have been so feeble that a glance at the natural landscape, or even the sight of a beautiful flower, gave me a bodily pain from which I shrank." As life drew on to its end, the indestructible loveliness of nature became to him a source of joy and peace ever more prized. "The world grows younger with age!" he exclaimed more than once. In emotional susceptibility to ideas he resembled Shelley, and probably it was this likeness of feeling which led him to call Shelley, in ministerial language, but with extraordinary charity for that age, "a seraph gone astray." He retained through life the intellectual sympathies of his youth, and in his last days still had an inclination toward community of property as the solution of the social problem; like Wordsworth and Southey he recoiled from the excesses of the French, but he never gave up the tricolor for the white cockade. In his generation nearly all men were hopeful of the accomplishment of beneficent reforms; but Channing was filled with an enthusiasm of hope which was almost the fervor of conviction. He was without that practical enthusiasm which is aroused by the presence of great deeds im-

mediately to be done; the objects for which he worked were far in the distance, scarcely discernible except from the mount of vision; but he was possessed by the enthusiasm which is kindled by the heat of thought and is wrapped in its own solitary flames, and he lived under the bright zenith of that mood of which Carlyle has shown the dark nadir and Teufelsdröch standing in its shadow gazing out over the sleeping city. These three principles — rectitude, sensibility, enthusiasm — were elemental in Channing's nature; and because they are moral, and not intellectual, he lived a spiritual rather than a mental life; he gained in depth rather than in breadth, and worked out his development by contemplation and prayer rather than by thought and act.

It appears strange, at first, that a man with these endowments should have been so conservative in opinion, and so little inclined to force upon the world what advanced opinions he did hold. A lover of truth unwilling to make proselytes, an enthusiast unwilling to act, seems an anomaly; but such was Channing's position. One cause of his aversion to pushing Unitarianism to its conclusion is found in the history

of his own conversion and in the character of his attachment to the new faith; he was a revolter of the heart; he was liberalized by his feelings. "My inquiries," he said, "grew out of the shock given to my moral nature by the popular system of faith." He was moved by sentiment in his rejection of Calvinism, and he was kept by sentiment from giving up the theory of the mysterious character and mission of Christ. The strength of his feelings operated to render him conservative, and the low estimate he apparently placed upon logical processes contributed to the same end. "It is a good plan," he wrote, "ever and anon to make a clean sweep of that to which we have arrived by logical thought, and take a new view; for the mind needs the baptism of wonder and hope to keep it vigorous and healthy for intuition." Either this distrust of the understanding working by logical processes, or else a native inaptitude for theological reasoning, prevented him from following out his principles to their conclusion. If he had framed a system, he would have held his views with greater certainty; as it was, he not only allowed the greatest liberty to individual opinion, but he dis-

trusted himself. "You young thinkers," he said, "have the advantage of us in coming without superstitious preoccupation to the words of Scripture, and are more likely to get the obvious meaning. *We* shall walk in shadows to our graves." The strength of inbred sentiment could not be overpowered by such feeble intellectual conviction. He was a moral, not an intellectual, reformer; his work was not the destruction of a theology, but the spread of charity. He felt more than he reasoned, and hence his rationalism was bounded, not by the unknown, but by the mystical. He was satisfied with this, and does not seem to have wished to make a definite statement of his beliefs. The whole matter is summed up by Miss Peabody when she says, "The Christianity which Dr. Channing believed . . . was a spirit, not a form of thought." A spirit of devotion toward the divine, a spirit of love toward the human, Channing preached to the world and illustrated by his life; but a new form of thought which shows the intellectual advance that alone is fatal to conservatism, — this was no part of his gift to men.

In the antislavery cause his conservatism appears in a less pleasing light. Here he

exhibited the scholar's reluctance to initiate reform, the scholar's perplexity before the practical barriers in the way of action. He was displeased by the rude voices about him, and frightened by the violence of determination which the reformers displayed. He looked to find the peace of the pulpit in the arena, and was bewildered by the alarms of the active strife. He did not choose his side until the last moment, and even then he delayed until he called down the just rebuke of May and the just defense that reformer made for his comrades: "The children of Abraham held their peace until at last the very stones have cried out, and you must expect them to cry out like the stones." Then, indeed, Channing showed that he was a Falkland on Cromwell's side, not acting without a doubt, but taking his place, nevertheless, openly and manfully beside the friend whom he had left alone too long. Yet he never lost, even in that stirring cause, the timidity of culture. He was of the generation of those cultivated men who earned for Boston the reputation for intellectual preëminence; but the political future of the country did not belong to him nor to his companions; it belonged to Garrison and Lincoln. Here it

is that Father Taylor's keen criticism strikes home: "What a beautiful being Dr. Channing is! If he only had had any education!" Channing's education had been of the lamp, and not of the sword; it seemed to Father Taylor pitifully narrow and palsy-stricken beside his own experience of the world's misery. Channing's life affords one more illustration of the difficulty the cultivated man finds in understanding and forwarding reform in its beginning; but he deserves the credit of having rid himself of the prejudices and influences that marked the society in which he moved, to a greater degree, perhaps, than any other of his circle.

The value of Channing's work in religion and in reform will be differently rated by men, for his service was of a kind which is too apt to be forgotten. The intrinsic worth of his writings remains to be tested by time; but their historic worth, as a means of liberalizing the New England of his day, was great and memorable. He gave his right hand to Emerson and his left hand to Parker; and, although he could not accompany them on the way, he bade them Godspeed. It was, perhaps, mainly through his influence that they found the field prepared for

them and the harvest ready, although he would not put his sickle in. It was largely due to him, also, that Boston became the philanthropic centre of the country. During his lifetime he won a remarkable respect and admiration. An exaggerated estimate of his eloquence, powers, and influence will continue to be held so long as any remain alive who heard his voice and remember its accents; in later times a truer judgment may be reached. Personally he was amiable, kindly, and courteous, notwithstanding the distance at which he seems to have kept all men. Dr. Walker said that conversation was always constrained in his study. In his nephew's narrative, it is said that the interview with him was "solemn as the visit to the shrine of an oracle." He himself told Miss Peabody after their friendship had lasted several years, that she had "the awe of the preacher" upon her. Finally, we read that no man ever freely laid his hand upon Channing's shoulder; and we wonder whether he ever remembered that St. John had "*handled* the Word made flesh." This self-seclusion, this isolation of sanctity, as it were, did not proceed from any value he set upon himself above his fellows; it

was the natural failing of a man who lived much within himself, and who always meditated the loftiest of unworldly themes. He was a faithful and well-beloved friend; and if in this, as in other directions, he "failed of the highest goodness," there are few in the same walk of life who attain to equal sincerity, charity, and purity, or equal serviceableness to the world.

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

The time has come to pay tribute of farewell upon the occasion of the death of Whittier. The popular instinct which long ago adopted him as the poet of New England is one of those sure arbiters, superior to all academic judgments upon the literary works of a man, which confer a rightful fame in life, and justify the expectation of a long remembrance. Whittier was distinctly a local poet, a New Englander; but to acknowledge this does not diminish his honor, nor is he thereby set in a secondary place. His locality, if one may use the expression, was a country by itself: its inhabitants were a peculiar people, with a strongly marked social and moral character, with a landscape and an atmosphere, with historical traditions, legends often romantic, and with strong vitalizing ideas. There was something more than a literary fancy in the naturalness with which Whittier sought a kind of fellowship with Burns; there was

a true resemblance in their situation as the poets of their own kin and soil, in their reliance upon the strength of the people of whom they were born, and in their cherished attachment to the places and scenes where they grew. New England, moreover, had this advantage, that it was destined to set the stamp of its character upon the larger nation in which it was an element; so that if Whittier be regarded, as he sometimes is, as a representative American poet, it is not without justice. He is really national so far as the spirit of New England has passed into the nation at large; and that vast body of Western settlers who bore New England to the frontier, and yet look back to the old homestead, find in him the sentiment of their past. There can be little question, too, that he is representative of a far larger portion of the American people than any other of the elder poets. His lack of the culture of the schools has here been in his favor, and has brought him closer to the common life; he is more democratic than he otherwise might have been; and the people, recognizing in him their own strain, have accepted him with a judgment

as valid as that with which cultivated critics accept the work of the man of genius who is also an artist. One calls him a local poet rather to define his qualities than to characterize his range.

The New England which Whittier represents has now become historical. The length of his life carried him beyond his times. It is plainer now than it was at an earlier day that his poems are one of the living records of a past which will be of perennial interest and ever held in honor. That his early poetic career fell in with the anti-slavery movement was not a misfortune for his Muse; the man fed upon it, and drew therefrom an iron strength for the moral nature which was the better half of his endowment. He was, too, one who was destined to develop, to reach his powers, more by exercising than by cultivating his poetic gift; and in the events of the agitation for the abolition of slavery he had subjects that drew out his moral emotions with most eloquent heat, and exalted his spirit to its utmost of sympathy, indignation, and heroic trust. The anti-slavery movement was his education, — in a true sense, the gymnastic of

his genius; but in the whole body of his work it was no more than an incident, although the most stirring and most noble, in his literary career, just as it was no more in the career of New England.

The great events with which a man deals, and part of which he is, obscure the other portions of his life; but it should not be forgotten that Whittier began as a poet, and not as a reformer, and it may be added that the poet in him was, in the long run, more than the reformer. He did not resort to verse as an expedient in propagandism; rather, wearing the laurel, — to use the good old phrase, — he descended into the field just as he was. He had begun with those old Indian legends in lines which still echoed with Byron's tales, and he had with them much the same success that attended other aboriginal poetry. It seems, as one reads the hundred weary epics, from which Whittier's are hardly to be distinguished, that the curse of extinction resting on the doomed race clung also to the Muse that so vainly attempted to recompense it with immortality in the white man's verse. These were Whittier's juvenile trials.

He came early, nevertheless, to his mature form in the ballad and the occasional piece; his versification was fixed, his manner determined, and thenceforth there was no radical change.

This is less remarkable inasmuch as it is a commonplace to say that he owed nothing to art; the strength of his native genius was all his secret, and when he had freed a way for its expression the task of his novitiate was done. He had now a mould in which to run his metal, and it satisfied him because he was not exacting of perfect form or high finish; probably he had no sense for them. This indifference to the artistic workmanship, which a later day prizes so much as to require it, allowed him to indulge his natural facility, and the very simplicity of his metres was in itself a temptation to diffuseness. The consequence was that he wrote much, and not always well, unevenness being usually characteristic of poets who rely on the energy of their genius for the excellence of their work. To the artist his art serves often as a conscience, and forces him to a standard below which he is not content to fall. Whittier, however, experienced

the compensations which are everywhere to be found in life, and gained in fullness, perhaps, more than he lost in other ways. The free flow of his thought, the simplicity of his structure, the willingness not to select with too nice a sense, but to tell the whole, all helped to that frankness of the man which is the great charm of his works, taken together, and assisted him in making his expression of old New England life complete. No man could have written Snow-Bound who remembered Theocritus. In Whittier, Nature reminds us, as she is wont to do from time to time, that the die which she casts exceeds the diploma of the school. Art may lift an inferior talent to higher estimation, but genius makes a very little art go a long way. This was Whittier's case. The poetic spark was inborn in him, living in his life; and when academic criticism has said its last word, he remains a poet, removed by a broad and not doubtful line from all stringers of couplets and filers of verses.

Whittier had, in addition to this clear native genius, character; his subject, too, New England, had character; and the worth of the man blending with the worth

of the life he portrayed, independent of all considerations of art, has won for him the admiration and affection of the common people, who know the substance of virtue, and always see it shining with its own light. They felt that Whittier wrote as they would have written, had they been gifted with the miraculous tongues; and this feeling is a true criterion to discover whether a poet has expressed the people rather than himself. They might choose to write like the great artists of letters; they know they never could do so; but Whittier is one of themselves.

The secret of his vogue with the plain people is his own plainness. He appeals directly to the heart, as much in his lesser poems as in those which touch the sense of right and wrong in men with stinging keenness, or in those which warm faith to its ardor. He has the popular love of a story, and tells it more nearly in the way of the old ballad-makers. He does not require a tragedy, or a plot, or any unusual action. An incident, if it only have some glamour of fancy, or a touch of pathos, or the likeness of old romance, is enough for him; he will take it and sing it merely as

something that happened. He was familiar with the legendary lore and historical anecdote of his own county of Essex, and he enjoyed these traditions less as history than as poetry; he came to them on their picturesque and human side, and cared for them because of the emotions they could still awake. It is to be acknowledged, too, that the material for these romances was just such as delights the popular imagination. The tales of the witches, notwithstanding the melancholy of the delusion, have something of the eeriness that is inseparable from the thought of the supernatural, and stir the dormant sense of some evil fascination; and the legends of spectral shapes that haunted every sea-coast in old times, and of which New England had its share, have a similar quality. Whether they are told by credulous Mather or the make-believing poet, they have the same power to cast a spell. When to this sort of interest Whittier adds, as he often does, the sights of religious persecution, or some Lochinvar love-making, or the expression of his faith in heaven, his success as a story-teller is assured. In reality, he has managed the ballad form with more

skill than other measures; but it is because he loves a story and tells it for its own sake, with the ease of one who sits by the fireside, and with a childish confidence that it will interest, that he succeeds so well in pleasing. In his sea-stories, and generally in what he writes about the ocean, it is observable that he shows himself to be an inland-dweller, whose acquaintance with the waves is by distant glimpses and vacation days. He is not a poet of the sea, but this does not invalidate the human truth of his tales of voyaging, which is the element he cared for. Perhaps the poetic quality of his genius is most clear in these ballads: there is a freer fancy; there are often verses about woman's eyes and hair and cheeks, all with similes from sky and gold and roses, in the old fashion, but not with less naturalness on that account; there is a more absorbing appeal to the imagination both in the characters and the incidents. If these cannot be called his most vigorous work, they are at least most attractive to the purely poetic taste.

In the ballads, nevertheless, one feels the strong undertow of the moral sense

dragging the mind back to serious realities. It is probably true of all the English stock, as it certainly is of New England people, that they do not object to a moral, in a poem or anywhere else. Whittier's moral hold upon his readers is doubtless greater than his poetic hold. He appeals habitually to that capacity for moral feeling which is the genius of New England in its public life, and the explanation of its extraordinary influence. No one ever appeals to it in vain; and with such a cause as Whittier took up to champion, he could ring out a challenge that was sure to rank the conscience of his people upon his side. His Quaker blood, of which he was proud, pleaded strongly in his own veins. He was the inheritor of suffering for conscience' sake; he was bred in the faith of equality, of the right of every man to private judgment, and the duty of every man to follow it in public action; and he was well grounded in the doctrines of political liberty which are the foundation of the commonwealth. It is more likely, however, that his enthusiasm for the slave did not proceed from that love of freedom which is the breath of New Eng-

land. It arose from his humanity, in the broad sense; from his belief, sincerely held and practiced, in the brotherhood of men; from the strong conviction that slavery was wrong. It was a matter of conscience more than of reason, of compassion and sympathy more than of theoretical ideas. These were the sources of his moral feeling; his attitude was the same whether he was dealing with Quaker outrages in the past or with negro wrongs in the present. In expressing himself upon the great topic of his time, he was thus able to make the same direct appeal to the heart that was natural to his temperament. The people either felt as he did, or were so circumstanced that they would respond from the same springs which had been touched in him, if a way could be found to them. Outside of the reserves of political expediency, the movement for abolition was harmonious with the moral nature of New England. Yet Whittier's occasional verses upon this theme made him only the poet of his party. In themselves they have great vigor of feeling, and frequently force of language; they have necessarily the defects, judged from the artistic stand-

point, of poems upon a painful subject, in which it was desirable not to soften, but to bring out the tragedy most harshly. The pain, however, is entirely in the facts presented; the poetry lies in the indignation, the eloquence, the fine appeal. These verses, indeed, are nearer to a prose level than the rest of his work, in the sense of partaking of the character of eloquence rather than of poetry. Their method is less through the imagination than by rhetoric. They are declamatory. But rhetoric of the balanced and concise kind natural to short metrical stanzas is especially well adapted to arrest popular attention and to hold it. Just as he told a story in the ballad with a true popular feeling, so he pleaded the cause of the abolitionists in a rhetoric most effective with the popular taste. In the war time, he rose, under the stress of the great struggle, to finer poetic work; the softer feelings of pity, together with a solemn religious trust, made the verses of those battle-summers different in quality from those of the literary conflict of the earlier years. He never surpassed, on the lower level of rhetoric, the lines which bade fare-

well to Webster's greatness, nor did he ever equal in intensity those rallying-cries of defiance to the South, in which the free spirit of the North seemed to speak before its time. In these he is urging on to the conflict, — a moral and peaceful one, he thought, but not less real and hard; in the war pieces, he seems rather to be waiting for the decision of Providence, while the fight has rolled on far in the van of where he stands. The power of all these poems, their reality to those times, is undeniable. Their fitness for declamation perhaps spread his reputation. Longfellow is distinctly the children's poet; but Whittier had a part of their suffrages, and it was by such stirring occasional verses that he gained them. In those years of patriotism he was to many of them, as he was to me, the first poet whom they knew. At that time his reputation in ways like these became established. If he had not then done his best work, he had at times reached the highest level he was to attain, and he had already given full expression to his nature. His place as the poet of the anti-slavery movement was fixed. It is observable that he did not champion

other causes after that of abolition was won, and in this he differed from most of his companions. The only other cause that roused him to the point of poetic expression was that of the Italian patriots. Some of his most indignant and sharpest invective was directed against Pope Pius IX., who stood to Whittier as the very type of that Christian obstructiveness to the work of Christ which in a lesser degree he had seen in his own country, and had seen always only to express the heartfelt scorn which descended to him with his Quaker birthright.

It would be unfitting to leave this part of the subject without reference to the numerous personal tributes, often full of grace, of tender feeling, and of true honor paid to the humble, which he was accustomed to lay as his votive wreath on the graves of his companions. One is struck once more by the reflection how large a part those who are now forgotten had in advancing the cause, how many modest but earnest lives entered into the work, and what a feeling of comradery there was among those engaged in philanthropic service in all lands. The verses to Garrison

and Sumner naturally stand first in fervor and range as well as in interest, but nearly all these mementos of the dead have some touch of nobility.

The victory of the Northern ideas left to Whittier a freer field for the later exercise of his talent. It was natural that he should have been among the first to speak words of conciliation to the defeated South, and to offer to forget. He was a man of peace, of pardons, of all kinds of catholic inclusions; and in this temperament with regard to the future of the whole country, fortunately, the people agreed with him. With the coming of the years of reconciliation his reputation steadily gained. His representative quality as a New Englander was recognized. It was seen that from the beginning the real spirit of New England had been truly with him, and, the cause being now won and the past a great one, his countrymen were proud of him for having been a part of it. At this happy moment he produced a work free from any entanglement with things disputed, remarkable for its truth to life, and exemplifying the character of New England at its fireside in the way which comes home

to all men. It is not without perfect justice that Snow-Bound takes rank with The Cotter's Saturday Night and The Deserted Village; it belongs in this group as a faithful picture of humble life. It is perfect in its conception and complete in its execution; it is the New England home, entire, with its characteristic scene, its incidents of household life, its Christian virtues. Perhaps many of us look back to it as Horace did to the Sabine farm; but there are more who can still remember it as a reality, and to them this winter idyl is the poetry of their own lives. It is, in a peculiar sense, the one poem of New England, — so completely indigenous that the soil has fairly created it, so genuine as to be better than history. It is by virtue of this poem that Whittier must be most highly rated, because he is here most impersonal, and has succeeded in expressing the common life with most directness. All his affection for the soil on which he was born went into it; and no one ever felt more deeply that attachment to the region of his birth which is the great spring of patriotism. In his other poems he had told the legends of the country, and

winnowed its history for what was most heroic or romantic; he had often dwelt, with a reiteration which emphasized his fondness, upon its scenery in every season, by all its mountains and capes and lakes and rivers, as if fearful lest he should offend by omission some local divinity of the field or flood; he had shared in the great moral passion of his people in peace and war, and had become its voice and been adopted as one of its memorable leaders; but here he came to the heart of the matter, and by describing the homestead, which was the unit and centre of New England life, he set the seal upon his work, and entered into all New England homes as a perpetual guest.

There remains one part of his work, and that, in some respects, the loftiest, which is in no sense local. The Christian faith which he expressed is not to be limited as distinctly characteristic of New England. No one would make the claim. It was descended from the Quaker faith only as Emerson's was derived from that of the Puritan. Whittier belongs with those few who arise in all parts of the Christian world and out of the bosom of all sects,

who are lovers of the spirit. They illustrate the purest teachings of Christ, they express the simplest aspirations of man; and this is their religious life. They do not trouble themselves except to do good, to be sincere, to walk in the sight of the higher powers with humbleness, and if not without doubt, yet with undiminished trust. The optimism of Whittier is one with theirs. It is indissolubly connected with his humanity to men. In his religious as in his moral nature there was the same simplicity, the same entire coherency. His expression of the religious feeling is always noble and impressive. He is one of the very few whose poems, under the fervor of religious emotion, have taken a higher range and become true hymns. Several of these are already adopted into the books of praise. But independently of these few most complete expressions of trust and worship, wherever Whittier touches upon the problems of the spiritual life he evinces the qualities of a great and liberal nature; indeed, the traits which are most deeply impressed upon us, in his character, are those which are seen most clearly in his religious verse.

It is impossible to think of him and forget that he is a Christian. It is not rash to say that it is probable that his religious poems have reached many more hearts than his anti-slavery pieces, and have had a profounder influence to quiet, to console, and to refine. Yet he was not distinctly a poet of religion, as Herbert was. He was a man in whom religion was vital, just as affection for his home and indignation at wrongdoing were vital. He gave expression to his manhood, and consequently to the religious life he led. There are in these revelations of his nature the same frankness and the same reality as in his most heated polemics with the oppressors of the weak; one cannot avoid feeling that it is less the poet than the man who is speaking, and that in his words he is giving himself to his fellow-men. This sense that Whittier belongs to that class of writers in whom the man is larger than his work is a just one. Over and above his natural genius was his character. At every step of the analysis, it is not with art, but with matter, not with the literature of taste, but with that of life, not with a poet's skill, but with a man's soul, that

we find ourselves dealing; in a word, it is with character almost solely: and it is this which has made him the poet of his people, as the highest art might have failed to do, because he has put his New England birth and breeding, the common inheritance of her freedom-loving, humane, and religious people which he shared, into plain living, yet on such a level of distinction that his virtues have honored the land.

The simplicity and dignity of Whittier's later years, and his fine modesty in respect to his literary work, have fitly closed his career. He has received in the fullest measure from the younger generation the rewards of honor which belong to such a life. In his retirement these unsought tributes of an almost affectionate veneration have followed him; and in the struggle about us for other prizes than those he aimed at, in the crush for wealth and notoriety, men have been pleased to remember him, the plain citizen, uncheapened by riches and unsolicitous for fame, ending his life with the same habits with which he began it, in the same spirit in which he led it, without any compromise with the world. The Quaker aloofness

which has always seemed to characterize him, his difference from other men, has never been sufficient to break the bonds which unite him with the people, but it has helped to secure for him the feeling with which the poet is always regarded as a man apart; the religious element in his nature has had the same effect to win for him a peculiar regard akin to that which was felt in old times for the sacred office; to the imagination he has been, especially in the years of his age, a man of peace and of God. No one of his contemporaries has been more silently beloved and more sincerely honored. If it be true that in him the man was more than the poet, it is happily not true, as in such cases it too often is, that the life was less than it should have been. The life of Whittier affects us rather as singularly fortunate in the completeness with which he was able to do his whole duty, to possess his soul, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. He was fortunate in his humble birth and the virtues which were about his cradle; he was fortunate in the great cause for which he suffered and labored in his prime, exactly fitted as it was to develop

his nature to its highest moral reach, and lift him to real greatness of soul; he was fortunate in his old age, in the mellowness of his humanity, the repose of his faith, the fame which, more truly than can usually be said, was "love disguised." Lovers of New England will cherish his memory as that of a man in whom the virtues of this soil, both for public and for private life, shine most purely. On the roll of American poets we know not how he may be ranked hereafter, but among the honored names of the New England past his place is secure.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

Mr. Lowell has written into his works his many titles to public remembrance with singular completeness. One need not go outside of the ten volumes in which the fruits of a long literary and public life are gathered to know what he has been and has done. The sign-manual of the poet, critic, and scholar is set upon the various page; moods of the fields and the homestead, the permanent attraction of human nature, patriotism profoundly felt are equally found in essay and poem; and in the admirable addresses there is stored up a lasting memory of the years of his distinguished service abroad. The fullness of this expression of a many-sided career is remarkable; but even more striking is the harmony of all these phases of life, one with another. There is no dividing line which sets off one part of his activity from its neighbor part; in his poetry there is politics, in his learning there is the vivifying touch of humor, in his reflection

there is emotion, in the levels of his most familiar prose there is, at inconstant intervals, the sudden lift of a noble thought; and hence his works are at once too diverse and too similar — diverse in their matter and similar in the personality through which they are given out — to be easily summed or described by the methods of criticism. If there is a clew that may be used, it is to be sought in his individuality, in the fact that his ten talents have somehow been melted and fused into one, and that the greatest — the talent of being a man first and everything else afterward. It goes with this that one looks in vain for any separation of his work into marked periods, such as may be observed in those writers who are absorbed by successive moods of the age or by new foreign influences in thought or literary forms, or generally are determined in their character by external forces. Mr. Lowell, with all his free curiosity, alertness of attention, and openness to the world of the present and of the past, has exercised a power of reaction equal to that of his receptivity, and illustrates the slow native growth of a self-assured mind. From the first to the last

of his pages the unity of mind is such that, unhelped by the context, one could rarely say with certainty whether a particular passage was from earlier or later years. Neither the style nor the way of thinking materially changes; the same person speaks with the same voice throughout. This singleness of Mr. Lowell's personality, by virtue of which he has held the same course from youth to age, as it is most obvious, is a cardinal matter. It were impossible to condense into the brief critical sketch for which only there is now occasion, all that criticism must find to say upon his writings throughout their reach; but in the absence of such a complete and careful survey, something may be arrived at, possibly, by attending to this stamp of individuality which gives likeness to all his works and imparts to them that quality of the living voice which most interests and best holds men, and is besides the invariable accompaniment of an original mind in literature.

It is commonly a disadvantage to a poet to be reputed a scholar. Belief in the spontaneity of genius is deeply implanted in men's mind, and culture is set over

against the simple primitive powers of feeling and thought as something by nature opposite. In this popular opinion there is a share of truth. Instinct is the method of genius, but culture, until it has been absorbed into character and temperament, works by afterthought. The conflict which is indicated by this widely diffused impression of the incompatibility of learning and inspiration is often felt by a poet himself in his own experience. Mr. Lowell, who more than any other writer of his time expresses the moods of that borderland which lies between instinct and reflection, speaks more than once of the intrusion of thought upon the natural way of living, and shows the old annoyance, that poetical regret for a simpler habit of life, which underlies the dream of the golden age and is the source of the charm of all pastoral. In a considerable portion of his nature-verse he accepts the Wordsworthian doctrine and goes to the fields as an escape from books, lays thought down like a burden and plays it is holiday with him, and in coming back to the study seems to make an unwelcome return to himself. Yet he is not slow to acknowl-

edge that the true poet has a pedigree that goes far into the past of men as well as a kinship of the day and hour with sky and birds and trees, the soft air and the warm landscape. If he seeks impulses in nature, he must find art in books; and from his earlier poems it is plain to see what sources in literature he most haunted. Imitativeness in youthful verse is a measure of susceptibility, and is rather a sign of strength than of weakness. The test of originality, or of the native force of the poetical endowment, lies in the spontaneity of the imitation and in the quickness with which one type shifts with another. It is noticeable that Mr. Lowell reproduced kinds of poetry rather than particular authors, style rather than moods, the cast of the words, not ideas; and the sign of culture in these beginnings is shown in the number of types which attracted him. So a similar literary scholarship, an acquaintance with what the poets of many lands had written, gave to Longfellow in his mature life, as well as at the outset, models of style which he made his own rather by graceful use of them than by informing them with original genius. In Mr. Lowell's case, per-

haps, the single peculiarity is the taste he early showed for certain of the English poets of the seventeenth century whose defects of oddity and unevenness could not destroy the largeness of their phrase and the purity and elevation of their continuous style at its best. One need not read Mr. Lowell's criticism to discover what value he placed upon Donne and Vaughan, for example, and those who neighbor them in the "well-languaged" manner. Culture of this sort, which is no more than the fruit of delight in poetry, has been the possession of many of those poets who are most thought inspired, and genius has thrived upon it; but usually the greatest of them have felt the gap between such poetry of the past and the nature they stood in presence of, and each in turn has reconciled his genius with his own age in some original way.

Mr. Lowell soon developed several styles in which he wrote poems of many kinds, and gave literary expression to sentiment, thought, and emotion; but he was later preëminently distinguished by three forms of verse. The most popular of these, apparently, and certainly the most original,

is that in which he employed the native Yankee speech. It was fairly by accident, he says, that he discovered the power of this New England lingo to express the character of the breed of men who used it and its fitness for the purpose in dealing with the subjects to which he applied it. Nevertheless, chance has as little place in literature as in other affairs of life. One finds only those things to which his faith has led him. There are reasons in plenty why Mr. Lowell, and not any of his contemporaries in letters, made the happy discovery of the Yankee idyl. His own roots go deep into the native soil: he loves that from which he sprang, and the past was realized to his apprehension most directly through the old time, which still lingered about the Cambridge of his growing years, and through its concrete characters of diverse types from clerical to rural which interested his human sympathy, struck his humorous sense, and embodied for him the long tradition of a dying age showing its results in man. This strong attachment to the paternal acres because of old associations is a trait common to New England; but none of the poets of the

land have given more frequent and free expression to the feeling or shown its power in an individual more constantly. The old New England character appealed to him in the same way that the Scotch type drew Sir Walter Scott's heart out; each found in the ancient habit of life of "sixty years since" a literary opportunity, but not by thought prepense; in both the old ways, crystallized in human nature, were loved for their own sake with a kind of natural affection, and were besides dignified by a true respect for their moral quality felt through all their humorous peculiarities. Scotland had more of history, of romance, and picturesqueness to mingle with the human element of common lives; in New England there was less of circumstance, but there was a core of character equally sound, a way of thinking and a freshness of expression, marked and peculiar, characterizing a people. The attractiveness of such survivals from the old days as Mr. Lowell either knew in the beginning of life or met with from time to time in the still uninvaded country districts was enhanced further by the fact that they stood for that simpler mode

of existence, already referred to, which the poet is fain to think of as the better way of living, could he make the impossible escape from his own bonds; and it was entirely natural that the two moods should blend and the keen air of New England suffer the pastoral change with the least artifice in the world. In the poem in which he describes his day under the willows Mr. Lowell reveals in most phases the feeling habitual to his mind, of the sense of nature as a refuge, of the strength of associations with a familiar landscape, of the welcome he would give to the rude moulds of man, and, in a word, shows the attitude of the poet, who is also a man of thought, toward nature and human nature met face to face; and in this reflective reverie, full of personal expression, the elements are the same as in pastoral verse though seen under a different aspect. When he came to imaginative expression through the medium of old New England, he escaped at once from the literary atmosphere, finding both a subject and a language wholly unworn by use in books; and what he was to express was just that type of character in which human nature

was most fresh, sincere, and genuine to his senses and could be entered into most completely by virtue of native sympathies long active in his blood, while the medium of speech was the tongue of the country people as they themselves had fashioned it for their own uses. Not since Theocritus wrote the Sicilian idyls has the pastoral come so near to real life or been not merely so free from artificiality but so slightly transformed in the change from life into art. Mr. Lowell did not attempt the useless task of saying what the average up-country man would have said if left to himself; but, in expressing the true genius of the New England character with a precision and range impossible except to a man of his own faculty, he succeeded in keeping both thought and language within the limit of the character through which he spoke. He permitted himself to use elevation or pathos or the beauty of natural scenes, which both true art and the impulse of his own awakened powers required; but he has managed all with so sure a hand, such discernment and sensitiveness in his feeling for the form used, that all is as definitely objective as drama

or novel, and the sense of reality is heightened, and the expression of the old spirit made more complete, by the curious prose of the pulpit in which the poems are set. It remains only to add that in taking public affairs for the main body of the matter of the verse Mr. Lowell chose the subject that fitted the mind of New England as perfectly as the country language fitted its lips.

The second form of verse in which Mr. Lowell has most excelled is next of kin to the Yankee poems. He was not only the son of New England, but he was born also to the wider inheritance of his fellow-countrymen everywhere, and could lay aside the provincialism of his eastern accent and phrase for the ampler English of the nation's speech. Love of home is the seed-plant of patriotism, and it was inevitable that faith to New England should grow to the larger compass of faith in America; and if in attachment to the native soil itself, such as Mr. Lowell expresses, there may be a certain closeness and peculiar warmth of the hearthstone, in his love of country there is more of what is purely ideal. When he first col-

lected his political papers, there was some surprise at the amount and value of his writings upon the public topics of the time; but though this work in prose had been forgotten, it would still have been plain enough from his poems that he was ever in a true sense the citizen. In thinking of his patriotic verse attention is commonly too exclusively given to the group of odes which were rather the last and crowning work of a lifelong labor than isolated productions. In the very start he gave his country the ringing stanzas of The Present Crisis, with the one indelible line, and that sonnet to Phillips which still stirs the blood; and, as time went on, in the first series of The Biglow Papers he dealt with a great political question of the period, and coming to the strong passions and immeasurable issues of the civil war he could scarce write of anything else. It was only after the peace, and in the assured triumph of the centennial anniversaries of the united country, that he closed the extensive series of poems, inspired by public spirit in the widest meaning of that phrase, with the long odes which by their solemn movement, their

gravity, and the loftiness of their finer passages have that stateliness which makes them seem to dwarf his less impressive poems in this kind. He had been the true citizen-poet for almost a lifetime before he was called to this ceremonial laureateship, and had used the lighter instrumentalities of humor, satire, and wit, the edge of epigram and poignancy of pathos, as occasion arose; so that one may fairly say that first and last he employed well-nigh all the resources of his mind in the service of his country. To think of the odes mainly as Mr. Lowell's patriotic verse would be a grave injustice both to the man and the poet, for passages may be found in the earlier verse equal, at least, to anything except the best in this last group. The distinction of the odes, and one reason why they have affected the public disproportionately in comparison with the best of the other poems, is their style. It is a style which Mr. Lowell has developed for himself, and is to be met with here and there in detached passages of his earlier poetry, but nowhere else is it so even and continuous as in the odes. It is characterized by a breadth and undu-

lation of tone and a purity hard to describe, but these traits are not of consequence in comparison with the certainty with which, no matter how finally resonant the wave of sound may be, the thought absorbs it and becomes itself vocal and musical. The diction itself and the cast of phrase metrically seem to derive from that period of English subsequent to the Elizabethan ferment when the language retained freedom and spirit and a certain amplitude from the past age, but had not yet subsided into the formalism, however excellent in itself, of the great age of prose; but if Mr. Lowell found the elements of this grave and full style in that period, he has so recombined them in his own manner that to trace out the source is at most only to hazard a guess. It is, however, this felicitous and well-commanded style which is the noticeable literary quality of the odes, and of the finer stanzas of other poems, such as The Washing of the Shroud, to name one of the first; to have elaborated it is, possibly, the highest distinction of Mr. Lowell as a writer, in the strict sense, on the purely original side of his literary craftsmanship.

It is, however, almost a diversion to direct attention to the literary quality of these poems. What is most to be remarked in them, aside from their earnest intention and the emotion that is sometimes the welling-up of a deep passion, is the purity of the democratic feeling in them, the soundness of their Americanism. Mr. Lowell in one of his earlier volumes laid his wreath on the grave of Hood, and there are a few of his poems that express the sympathy of philanthropy with the poor and outcast; but this is a comparatively crude form of the democratic idea and hardly exceeds charity. It is easy to pity suffering in any shape and to believe in the virtues that poverty is commonly thought to favor; it is a harder matter to put faith in man. But that rooted interest in human nature, which has already been spoken of as cardinal in Mr. Lowell's habit of mind, as it helped him to reconcile poetry with the life of rural New England, aided also in the generation of his democratic faith, for when a man is once interested in his fellows he is already halfway to being friends with them and thus coming to know how human they are. To

accustom one's self to disregard the accidents of manner and station sufficiently to see the man as he is, to have a clear sight for genuine character under any of the disguises of unfamiliarity and prejudice, to know how simple and how common are the elements that go to the making of manhood, are the paths to belief in democracy; and to do this, it is enough to live out of doors. Culture that lives in the library may easily miss its way. The Biglow Papers by themselves would be sufficient proof of such democracy as goes to make a town-meeting; but the American idea is a larger thing. The better proof which Mr. Lowell gave of his quality was in the recognition he gave to Lincoln. He was the first of our writers to see what name led all the rest, and the truth which he intimated in Blondel, and spoke more plainly in prose, he made at last shine out in the most famous passage of his greatest ode. One could not be so early to perceive this unsuspected fame before it filled the world and while it was yet in the clouds through which it broke, unless faith in man came natural to him. It was so in this case, and Mr. Lowell understood the

"new birth of our new soil" not only in the fact that another name was given to immortal memory, but also in the profounder truth that the soil which had borne such a son was the heir of a new age. With all the faith he had in his own people of the past, the poet looked forward to the new race which is yet forming in our womb; and nowhere in our literature is there more direct expression of the national faith in mere manhood than in a few great lines of these patriotic poems, or more soberly and explicitly in the essay upon Democracy. It may seem little that a man should believe in what his country believes in; but it may fairly be thought that Mr. Lowell, from his place in conservative thought, is as much beforehand in his recognition of democracy in the larger sense as he was earlier than others in his recognition of Lincoln.

Besides the New England and the national poems, Mr. Lowell has written a third sort that stand in a class apart and have a distinction, if not so unshared as these, shared certainly by no other poet of this country. They are what would ordinarily be called poems of culture, the verse of a

man deeply imbued with the literature of the past. This definition rests on their form rather than their subject-matter. They are run in the moulds that have been handed down in the tradition of literature and belong to the gild. Mr. Lowell, who has shown a disposition to experiment in verse and try many kinds, has used a variety of these set measures, but in two sorts he has shown a hand of unrivaled mastery. In the verses Credidimus Jovem Regnare there is, perhaps, the best example of one sort, in which the intellect finds crystalline expression; modern as it is in substance and strongly personal in quality, this poem is at once recognized as being composed in a classic style which is neither a revival nor archaic, but, though written yesterday, has the look of century-old verse still fresh. Another instance is the poem upon the goldfishes, one of the best from his pen. The second sort in which this perfection of style is equally found is illustrated by the letter to Curtis as aptly as by any single piece; the terseness, ease, and finish of these lines, in which compliment blends with the wisdom of life and the whole is subdued within

the range of personal talk from friend to friend, are qualities unique in our poetry and recall the habits and modes of utterance of a more polished lettered age, when intellect and manners held their own beside emotion, and the literary life was more complete in manly powers. In both these sorts of pedestrian poetry, if the devotees of inspiration will insist on the distinction, it is rather the man of cultivation conversing with others than the man of genius expressing his soul whom we find; but the classic literature of the world owes much to the poets who have put into just such verse the mind and morals of their time undisturbed by the strong emotion which has latterly ruled so supreme. Mr. Lowell has certainly strengthened his work by varying it with this element of the prose of verse both in the octosyllabic and the pentameter forms. It was necessary, too, for the complete expression of himself that he should give out his literary culture in art, and also find fit channels for that power of pure thinking which divides with the poetic impulse his allegiance to literature. For, when the end is reached and one looks back over

the range of Mr. Lowell's poetical works entire, the one thing that binds them all together and runs through them, besides that unresting interest in man which is their blood, is the equally single and widely diffused presence of thought, which is their spirit. In no poet of our land, at least, is there to be found so large a number of single thoughts, to apply but one test, as in these poems; and there is so little need to say that in none other is there continuous reflection to the same degree, that Mr. Lowell is reputed rather for an excess of thought. To examine the matter further, to consider such a poem as The Cathedral, for instance, would force this sketch beyond its limits; but the poems of pure reflection should be at least referred to. So, too, the type of which Endymion is the most eminent example should be named, and the poems in which Mr. Lowell has sought for musical effects — a most interesting group to the student of poetry, of which, perhaps, The Fountain of Youth is the most remarkable — should not be left unmentioned even in the briefest account of his work. It is not within the scope of this

paper, however, to enter upon the criticism of Mr. Lowell's poetry further than to indicate such cardinal qualities as can be brought out by a broad treatment of it in the mass; and if the three kinds of verse in which he seems most to excel, — the pastoral of his own people in their special language, the poems of patriotism of several sorts, but particularly those in which he employs his peculiar grave and noble style, and the poems distinguished by classic perfection of manner, — if these have been discriminated, and in the course of such remarks the poet's primary instincts of love of human nature, patriotic passion and faith, and devotion to the worth and charm of literature in both its phases of thought and art, have been made obvious, the little that was aimed at has been accomplished; for it must then appear that in his poetry Mr. Lowell has really expressed himself with directness and fullness, and in the best of his work with no more intrusion of the self-consciousness of culture to the prejudice of the native gift than was necessary to make his poetry square all round with himself. The fact that so much of his verse of all sorts has

the quality of improvisation is of itself proof of the immediacy of his method, the genuineness of the impulse, the truth of his statement somewhere that he has ever waited for poetry to find him and make itself out of his life. It results from this that his poetical works are the true record of that life, — the voice, as has been said, of the man, and immeasurably more complete as an expression of individuality than the larger body of prose.

If one must pack the description of that body of prose into a phrase, — and little more is possible here, — it might fairly be said that (to leave the journals out of account) the essays and addresses of various kinds, storing the results of scholarship and reflection, express distinctively the author's mind. Interesting as the political papers are, both by their topics and the special contribution of the author to thought necessarily more or less generally shared, they remain subordinate to his critical work on great authors. It is in the literary papers proper that Mr. Lowell has hived what he has gathered of wisdom in his wide range through literature; and though he does not speak

more directly in them than in his speeches or poems, he communicates more and does it in a more exceptional way. Political thoughtfulness characterizes many Americans, but one would hesitate if asked to name Mr. Lowell's equals, in his time, in acquaintance with literature; hardly any name but Longfellow's would be offered in scholarly rivalry with his own on this ground; and he excels Longfellow by virtue of the extraordinary critical power which he brings to bear upon literature. He is, indeed, the only critic of high rank that our literature owns, and the fineness of his quality is obscured by the very singleness of his position, since there are none to compare him with; nor, if one goes to England for such comparison, is the case much bettered, for he surpasses his fellows there with equal ease. The critical faculty is so rare that criticism as an art suffers in repute thereby, and its results are undervalued; but if one is willing to learn, there is in the body of Mr. Lowell's literary papers a canon of pure literature so defined in intellectual principles and applied with such variety and fruitfulness as to suffice for an education in literary

taste; and this education is of the best sort since it teaches how to see rather than how to analyze, is intuitive instead of scientific, and thus follows the method native to literature and logically belonging to it. The results of this method in what Mr. Lowell says about great works of genius are, nevertheless, the main thing, and the value of them is sufficiently appreciated by students of literature. It ought to be observed, perhaps, that the wealth of single thought which has already been noticed as characterizing his poetry is as strikingly found in these prose works of every sort. Here, too, no writer of the time equals him except Emerson; and in Mr. Lowell's work there is none of that Delphic quality which sometimes renders Emerson's most impressive phrases only an appearance of thought. Just as in all of Mr. Lowell's writings one always seems in direct contact with the man speaking, so his words are always weighted with that sense and common judgment which make them shells so impalpable that one touches the mind through them. In his poetry he gives himself, and in his prose he yields up his wisdom; to do this so immediately

that the intervention of the printed page is not felt is the last victory of the faculty of expression in literature, whether it be achieved with the simplicity of genius or by the perfection of art through culture, — nor are the two ways incompatible.

Such, briefly stated, is the impression made by a broad view of Mr. Lowell's various contributions to our literature. Notwithstanding his acquirements in general and the special perfection of his literary culture, which are felt throughout his writings in their mass, it would appear that his self-expression, whether on the more scholarly, or the civic, or the simplest human side, has been more spontaneous than is commonly thought. It is true that the spontaneity of a complex mind wears a different aspect from that of a simpler nature, but essentially it is the same, and brings with it the same reality of life, the same genuineness and sincerity, on account of which it is justly thought to be a primary element in the genius of great writers and true poets. The intrinsic worth of Mr. Lowell's works has been purposely subordinated here; but that part of criticism of them is not in any

risk of misapprehension or forgetfulness. The simplicity of his nature, as shown in his works, beneath the diversity of his interests and the subtle refinements of his intellectual part, the unity of his life as poet, citizen, and thinker, and the harmonious interplay of his faculties one with another, and especially the directness of his expression in every mode of writing, have not been hitherto so much recognized as was right; and only by attending to these primary traits can one be just to a great writer.

DARWIN'S LIFE.

THERE is nothing more useful to observe in the life of Darwin than its simplicity. He was the man of science as Marlborough was the soldier, and he was only that. From boyhood he refused all other ways of life and knowledge as by instinct, and in his maturity the ill health which ends the career of ordinary men only confirmed him in his own; he was always the collector, the investigator, or the theorizer. A second quality, which is general enough to be constantly attracting attention, is the thoroughly English character of his life. The stock from which he sprang was rich in old English qualities of vigor, sense, and originality; the house in which he was reared offers an excellent type of English family life, and was as good a place to be born in as could be desired for any son; his father's strong character, the influences of his older relatives, the ordinary schools he attended, the smallest incidents of his childhood, even the jokes of his play-

fellows, belong to the moral climate of the old country; and it does not need the grouse-shooting, the Cambridge undergraduate suppers, and the proposition that he should choose the Church for a profession to tell us where we are. Indeed, Darwin in his youth, spirited, cordial, and overflowing with health, in his early surroundings of English strength and kindness, was quite as attractive as in his quieter, and in some respects narrower, working life.

He certainly won upon the men whom he met at the outset of his career. "Looking back," he says, "I infer that there must have been something in me a little superior to the common run of youths: otherwise the above-mentioned men, so much older than me and higher in academical position, would never have allowed me to associate with them. Certainly I was not aware of any such superiority; and I remember one of my sporting friends, Turner, who saw me at work with my beetles, saying that I should some day be a Fellow of the Royal Society, and the notion seemed to me preposterous." Of these men Henslow was the most attached to him and interested in his success. He had not done much more than work at

"his beetles," but his scientific taste was already the ruling genius of his life. It is surprising to see how completely he remained untouched by the ordinary influences of a university training; he thought in later years that his scholastic education had been a waste of time, and he seems justified when one perceives how little good he got from it. His was a mind that belonged to himself, self-fed, almost self-made; he lived his own life, and not another's, from the start; though his taste for collecting was hereditary, the persistence with which he gave himself up to following it, the completeness of his surrender to his one predominant talent, was his own. He was, nevertheless, better furnished with intellectual power than he appears to have believed. "From my earliest youth," he writes, "I have had the strongest desire to understand or explain whatever I observed, that is, to group all facts under some general laws." It is true that he started from some specific facts, had a definite, tangible problem to solve; but he felt the necessity to solve it. He differed from the collector in this, that his curiosity was not exhausted in gathering materials, but he must also order his materials; or to

put it exactly, must organize his knowledge. This shows the great vitality of his reasoning faculty, which within its special range was really precocious. The native strength of his mind in this direction is also illustrated by the great pleasure he derived from reading Paley's Evidences. "The logic of this book," he declares, "and, as I may add, of his Natural Theology, gave me as much delight as did Euclid. The careful study of these works, without attempting to learn any part by rote, was the only part of the academical course which, as I then felt and as I still believe, was of the least use to me in the education of my mind. I did not at that time trouble myself about Paley's premises; and taking these in trust, I was charmed and convinced by the long line of argumentation." He acknowledges his inability in later life to follow trains of abstract reasoning, such as make the matter of metaphysics; but he was quite aware of his aptitude for inductive reasoning, and does not overestimate its influence in the composition of his great work. "Some of my critics have said, 'Oh, he is a good observer, but he has no power of reasoning!' I do not think that this can be true, for the Ori-

gin of Species is one long argument from the beginning to the end, and it has convinced not a few able men." His taste for collecting was a *sine qua non*, but it was this power of reasoning, however limited in range, that made him great; and it is as clearly to be seen in operation in his formative years as was the passion for collecting which was to feed it with material to work upon. His vivacity and energy no doubt counted much in winning for him the friendship of elder men, and he possessed that indefinable but potent quality of personal attractiveness; but Henslow in the beginning, as Lyell later, must have seen in him that happy conjunction of tastes and faculties which made his genius for science, or at least they must have perceived the promise of it.

All the circumstances of his life seem to have conspired to favor this special endowment. The very fact that the classics did nothing for him helped him: he was relieved from the confusion caused by complex and disturbing elements in a varied education; he had no difficulty in making his choice; he was not afterward drawn aside by the existence of other unsatisfied tastes, artifi-

cially cultivated; he had no ambition for that roundness of development which is a fetich of modern times; he did not fritter away his time and energy in directions in which he could not excel. It is not meant to hold up his luck in this respect as exemplary good fortune, but only to emphasize the way in which it told on his success. He was not less happy in the exterior circumstances of his life, and in those things which come by a kind of hazard. His appointment to the Beagle was a Napoleonic opportunity, and in looking back he realized its value to the full: "The voyage of the Beagle has been by far the most important event in my life, and has determined my whole career; yet it depended on so small a circumstance as my uncle offering to drive me thirty miles to Shrewsbury, which few uncles would have done, and on such a trifle as the shape of my nose." But one ought not to exaggerate the element of chance; and though Captain Fitz-roy had continued to disapprove of Darwin's nose, and his uncle had not interfered to overcome the elder Darwin's objection to the voyage on the score that it would be an unbecoming adventure for a prospective clergyman, and on

other equally good or better grounds, yet we might have had our great naturalist. The voyage of the Beagle, nevertheless, was the turning-point of Darwin's life. He obtained in the course of it the first real training of his mind; it brought before him several departments of science in such a way that he approached them with active and original thoughts, and was constantly forced into an inquiring and bold attitude toward the novel material he found; it gave him five years alone with science, and free from any near master to whom he might have formed the habit of deferring. Huxley does not overstate the material advantages that this training brought with it: "In Physical Geography, in Geology proper, in Geographical Distribution, and in Palæontology, he had acquired an extensive practical training during the voyage of the Beagle. He knew of his own knowledge the way in which the raw materials of these branches of science are acquired, and was therefore a most competent judge of the speculative strain they would bear. That which he needed, after his return to England, was a corresponding acquaintance with Anatomy and Development, and their relations to Taxonomy, and

he acquired this by his Cirripede work." It is to be noticed that during his voyage in the Beagle he became convinced of the "wonderful superiority of Lyell's manner of treating geology" over every other author's. This is an illustration, like that drawn from Paley, of the character of his mind as primarily a reasoning mind; for what he recognized in Lyell was a method. It was on this voyage, too, that he became ambitious; he began to believe that he might add to the stock of human knowledge, and the stimulation of the welcome his success was meeting in England was evidently keenly felt. He put his whole heart into the work, and few passages are more stirring than those which describe his zeal in his first really scientific enthusiasm, after he had given up his gun as of less use than his eye, and had found sport, even with his fond love of it, an inferior pleasure to the pursuit of knowledge; then, alone in the Andes and the Southern Ocean, he came to his majority.

Mr. Huxley, in the passage cited, has noted the need Darwin had for further training, particularly as a naturalist. He obtained this by his work on the Cirripedes,

an eight years' labor. This concluded his education. Of the value of it merely as training and to himself, Sir Joseph Hooker says: "Your father recognized three stages in his career as a biologist: the mere collector at Cambridge: the collector and observer in the Beagle, and for some years afterwards; and the trained naturalist after, and only after, the Cirripede work. That he was a thinker all along is true enough." Huxley says that Darwin never did a wiser thing than when he devoted himself to these years of patient toil. Darwin himself does not indicate that he purposely chose to do this monograph in order to educate himself, and he doubts whether it was worth the time. He seems to have been gradually drawn into it, and to have finished it because he had gone so far. When he had done with it, at any rate, if not before, he was a thoroughly furnished man for such investigation as was to be his title to lasting fame. He had come to be thus equipped by the mere course of his life; by beetles at Cambridge, and the Beagle, and the Cirripedes. Yet if he had planned his education from the start for the express purpose of dealing in the most masterly way with

the mass of diversified details out of which the Origin of Species and the other derivative coördinate works grew, it is hard to see in what way his course could have been improved. The ill-health which seized him so soon was almost a blessing in disguise, since it isolated him from the distractions of modern London, made him value his life and his time, and possibly, by the economy of his strength which it necessitated, aided as much as it hindered him.

One need not follow him through the composition of his books, or even through the elaboration of the theory of natural selection, during the many years that it was growing in his laboratory of notes. For him the formulating of that theory was inevitable: it seems, as one observes him, natural enough to have been foretold of him; but it followed, not from his position, which another man might have occupied, but from his genius. The qualities of mind which it required were not many, and one understands readily why it is so commonly said that all is explained by his power of observation and its vast range; but it did require one high faculty of the mind, and a rare one, which Darwin had preëminently among

the men of his time, — the faculty, namely, of discerning the lines of inquiry in a mass of as yet unrelated facts. He somewhere says that he had found it harder, perhaps, to put the question than it was to reach the answer. This power is the great economizer of mental energy, in any branch of investigation; it is, to the man who has it, equivalent to a compass: and to Darwin it was the one talent without which his stores of knowledge would have been no more than a heap of unclassified specimens in a museum cellar. Moral and physical qualities he had, besides; his patience and his practiced vision were invaluable; but it was the intellectual part that penetrated the secrets of nature. This sense of the problem, this eye for the question, was most serviceable to his success. His acuteness in perceiving the importance of the infinitely little, which is often mentioned as one of his distinguishing traits, was only an incident of this larger endowment; and his power to make other men useful to him, specialists in horticulture or physiology, or even common observing men, was only the knowledge of how to put practical questions. The point is worth emphasizing, because in this age of the accu-

mulation of scientific detail it is too apt to be forgotten that the thinking mind is as rare in science as in other departments, and is, nevertheless, the indispensable thing which makes a man great.

Here it is worth while to advert to that persistent discussion respecting the nature of a modern education, which Darwin's experience is bound to bring forward with renewed vigor. His testimony, both in the chart of himself which he gave Mr. Galton and in the account he wrote for his children, is unequivocal. He says he was self-taught; that his training at the university was of no use to him, speaking generally; and that the classics in particular were barren. He seems to be quite correct in his statement; the claim that his powers of observation and comparison were really developed by schoolboy attention to Latin and Greek terminations is purely pedagogical; nor is there any reason to question that men of genius can be successful, achieve eminent greatness for themselves, and do work of the highest value to society without immediate obligation to those studies usually called the humanities. This is nothing new. Instances of self-education for special careers are to be found in

other walks than those of science: in war, in administration, and generally in active life, and not infrequently in literature itself. But it is worth observing what testimony these volumes bear to the wonderful vitality of the Greek intelligence. Speaking of the theory of Pangenesis, Darwin writes to a correspondent that the views of Hippocrates "seem almost identical with mine, — merely a change of terms, and an application of them to classes of facts necessarily unknown to the old philosopher." Again, he writes of Aristotle: "From quotations which I had seen I had a high notion of Aristotle's merits, but I had not the most remote notion what a wonderful man he was. Linnæus and Cuvier have been my two gods, though in very different ways, but they were mere schoolboys to old Aristotle. . . . I never realized, before reading your book, to what an enormous consummation of labor we owe even our common knowledge." A more striking passage is that of Huxley's, where he says: "The oldest of all philosophies, that of evolution, was bound hand and foot and cast into utter darkness during the millennium of theological scholasticism. But Darwin poured new life-

blood into the ancient frame; the bonds burst, and the revivified thought of ancient Greece has proved itself to be a more adequate expression of the universal order of things than any of the schemes which have been accepted by the credulity and welcomed by the superstition of seventy later generations of men." Rediscovery, however, is not obligation; and, perhaps, if Darwin had been thoroughly imbued with the Greek mode of looking upon the universe, he would not have been really indebted to it for his own views; for he went upon different grounds in forming his conceptions. The real question is, not whether Darwin succeeded without Greek influences, but whether he lost anything because of his failure to assimilate them. The answer seems plain. It is written all over these pages, and is expressly given by Darwin in more than one passage.

No words can be too strong to express the lovableness of Darwin's personality, or the moral beauty of his character. In his biography, it is true, he is presented as the man of science; but he is seen occasionally in other aspects. He was a dutiful, respectful, and affectionate son, at the outset of his

life. He thought his father was sometimes unjust, but he always spoke of him as "the wisest man he ever knew;" and there is a touching passage in one of his letters home, when his father had sent him a note: "I almost cried for pleasure at receiving it; it was very kind, thinking of writing to me." He was also, in his turn, an admirable father, considerate, patient, and very tender. One of his sons tells a most significant anecdote of once having drawn on himself some indignant exclamation, "almost with fury," and the end of it being that "next morning, at seven o'clock or so, he came into my bedroom and sat on my bed, and said he had not been able to sleep, from the thought that he had been so angry with me, and after a few more kind words he left me." His description of his little daughter who died is of itself enough to show the extraordinarily fine quality of his affections; and in general his relations with his children are almost ideal in gentleness, kindness, and companionableness. He was also a good friend and acquaintance. In a word, in his private social relations he was exemplary, judged by the standard of a high civilization. He was not without a sense, too, of public duty.

He felt strongly only upon the subject of slavery, and this was largely because of his travels in slave countries. He was interested in philanthropic efforts to some degree, and especially in furthering the increase of kindness to animals. But he was remote from public affairs, and led even in his sympathies a life somewhat narrowly confined to his own circle and his work in science. In other parts of his character there is nothing to displease. He was modest and just, and free from envy, conscientious to an extreme, and as ready to give as to receive help in all ways. He was more pleased with his fame than he acknowledged; he cared deeply for the success of his theory, and was well aware of its influence on his own reputation as one to be classed with Newton's; he liked praise and distinction, though he limited his desire to the commendation and respect of naturalists; but this is only to wish to be approved by the most competent judges. He was fair to Wallace, and exhibited the best of tempers toward him; but between the lines one reads that he was nettled and annoyed by the incident, and it must be concluded that as he was ambitious in youth, he was de-

sirous of having his due in manhood, and valued fame.

This was a character which might well spare the humanities. The fact remains that he did spare them. What he lost was culture. The confession that he makes of the gradual atrophy of his æsthetic tastes will be long quoted as one of the most remarkable facts of his life. He began with a susceptibility to music, which by his son's account he did not lose; with a liking for poetry, such that he read The Excursion twice, and he would not have read it except for pleasure; and he used to take Milton with him in his pocket. In art he went but a little way, if, indeed, he ever really had any eye for it. He was religious, as an English boy usually is; but his interest in belief regarding religious subjects died out, and, what is of more consequence, the emotions which were called out by it in early life ceased to be exercised. There was a deadening, in other words, of all his nature, except so far as it was fed by his work, his family, and his friends in its intellectual and social parts. So complete was this change that it affected even his appreciation of beautiful scenery, which had evidently

given him keen delight in his youth and travels. He dates this change from just after his thirtieth year, when he became absorbed in scientific pursuits as his profession. Something, no doubt, and perhaps much, is to be set down to the effect of his ill-health, which left him with diminished energies for any recreation; his strength was exhausted in his few hours of work. He was himself so convinced that his life had been narrowed in these ways, that he says if he had it to live over he would have planned to give a certain time habitually to poetry.

It would be too much to say that the failure of Darwin to appropriate the humane elements in his university education accounts in any perceptible degree for these defects. In culture, as in science, the self-making power of the man counts heavily; and there is such inefficiency in those whose duty it is to give youth a liberal education from classical sources, there are such wrong methods and unintelligent aims in the universities, that it might easily prove to be the case that a student with the most cordial temperament toward the humanities would profit only imperfectly by his residence at seats of learning. In spite of these reservations

however, the Greek culture is the historical source of what are traditionally the higher elements in our intellectual life, and has been for most cultivated men the practical discipline of their minds. But it is to be further observed that the example of Darwin, if it should be set up as showing that Greek culture is unnecessary in modern days, goes just as directly and completely to prove that all literary education, as well by modern as by ancient authors, is superfluous. It is enough to indicate to what a length the argument must be carried, if it is at all admitted. The important matter is rather the question, How much was Darwin's life injured for himself by his loss of culture, in the fact that some of those sources of intellectual delight which are reputed the most precious for civilized man were closed to him?

The blank page in this charming biography is the page of spiritual life. There is nothing written there. The entire absence of an element which enters commonly into all men's lives in some degree is a circumstance as significant as it is astonishing. Never was a man more alive to what is visible and tangible, or in any way matter of

sensation; on the sides of his nature where an appeal could be made, never was a man more responsive; but there were parts in which he was blind and dull. Just as the boy failed to be interested in many things, the man failed too; and he disregarded what did not interest him with the same ease at sixty as at twenty. What did interest him was the immediately present, and he dealt with it admirably, both in the intellectual and the moral world; but what was remote was as if it were not. The spiritual element in life is not remote, but it is not matter of sensation, and Darwin lived as if there were no such thing; it belongs to the region of emotion and imagination, and those perceptions which deal with the nature of man in its contrast with the material world. Poetry, art, music, the emotional influences of nature, the idealizations of moral life, are the means by which men take possession of this inner world of man; to which, for man at least, nature in all its immensity is subsidiary. Darwin's insensibility to the higher life — for so men agree to call it — was partly, if not wholly, induced by his absorption in scientific pursuits in the spirit of materialism. We praise him for his achieve-

ments, we admire his character, and we feel the full charm of his temperament; he delights us in every active manifestation of his nature. We do not now learn for the first time that a man may be good without being religious, and successful without being liberally educated, and worthy of honor without being spiritual; but a man may be all this and yet be incomplete. Great as Darwin was as a thinker, and winning as he remains as a man, those elements in which he was deficient are the noblest part of our nature.

BYRON'S CENTENARY.

The absence of any widespread interest in the centenary of Lord Byron is a marvelous illustration of the vicissitudes of literary reputation. Only in Greece was public notice taken of it. The brilliancy with which his fame burst forth, the unexampled rapidity with which it spread through Europe, the powerful influence it continued to exert on the youth of the next age, were to the men who witnessed them sure signs of the magnitude of his future renown. The decadence into which it has fallen would have been incredible to them. It was Byron's distinction to have been the first man of letters who enjoyed an international reputation at once; and one can hardly credit the fact that he has shrunk so wonderfully. In the month of his death Sir Walter Scott, in a brief article which attracted wide attention, said that it seemed almost as if the sun in heaven had been extinguished; and when Scott soon followed him, Landor, writing to

Crabb Robinson, remarked that the death of these two had "put the fashionable world into deep mourning," and drew gloomy predictions, in the well-known manner of contemporaries, because the great men were leaving no successors.

Something of the shock of Byron's death and of the exaltation of his genius at the moment was due to the manner in which he met his end; he had fallen like one of his own heroes, died in a cause, and appealed to the romantic feeling of the age. Even then, however, to admire him was found to be a different thing from approving him. When the thirty-seven guns had been fired at Missolonghi, and the Turks had responded with "an exultant volley," and the ship had brought home the remains, the Abbey was refused, and he was buried in the common soil of England. Two incidents of the funeral bring him very near to us. Lady Caroline Lamb met the cortège as she was driving, and, on being told, in answer to her question, that it was Byron's, fainted in her carriage; and Mary Shelley, as she saw the procession winding down, reflected on the short-sightedness of human life, asking who could have foretold at Lerici such changes as she had witnessed in two little years.

Hobhouse, with all his efforts, could raise only a thousand pounds for a memorial, but with this he got Thorwaldsen to make a statue which was sent to England in 1834. The Abbey was again refused, and, to the discredit of the nation, this work was allowed to remain stored away in the Custom-house eleven years, because no fit place could be got to put it in. At last, in 1845, Dr. Whewell gave permission to set it up in the Library of Trinity, which it still adorns. Thirty years later came the miserable fiasco of Beaconsfield's Committee, which, far from making Newstead Abbey a national possession and gathering there the relics of Byron, placed in Hamilton Park (other sites being refused) that statue of the poet leaning on the rocks, with his dog Boatswain beside him, which can only be described as popular melodrama in stone, beautiful only for the mass of red marble which the Greek Government gave for its base. It is to be remarked, also, that at this time the Abbey was a third time practically refused, as Dean Stanley, out of respect to the action of his two predecessors, but not apparently for any other reason, precluded application for erecting a tablet there by a letter in which he

said he preferred the subject should not be brought before him.

The history of monuments, however, is not necessarily proof of fame. Others of England's greatest do not sleep in the Abbey, and the hero not infrequently waits for his statue a long age. The place of fame is on the lips of men, and Macaulay, when Moore's Life came out, could speak of Byron as "the most celebrated man in Europe." The decline of his vogue was nevertheless rapid and unmistakable. We all remember Carlyle's oracle: "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe." This must have been about 1840. But, unfortunately, as one writer observes, to open Goethe is to return to Byron's greatness. Did not Goethe tell Eckermann that a man of Byron's eminence would not come again, nor such a tragedy as Cain? He thought him greater than Milton — "vast and widely varied," whereas the latter was only simple and stately. Perhaps, as we have been told, Goethe was flattered by Byron's imitation.

Whatever was the reason, the critical judgment of Goethe is one to be weighed with regard to Byron, and to himself also, for that matter. What part Goethe's praise

may have had in making Byron the hero of "Young Germany" we have no means of determining, but his works were vital in the new age there, and still his hold seems greater on the Germans, if we may judge by the test of translations and biography, than it is elsewhere on the Continent. Heine was more than touched by him, though he was far from being his duplicate, and could see the humorous side of those young Parisians — Musset the foremost — who were melancholy in the full glow of first manhood, and went about in despair dining sumptuously every day. One pities Musset, for Byron was, as much as another man can be, the secret of his fate. Lamartine caught only the sentimentality of Byron, but Musset assimilated his darker spirit, his recklessness, and license, and skepticism, and transmuted his very coarseness into a Parisian vulgarity. Stendhal and Sainte-Beuve paid tribute to him; and, to cut the subject short, Mazzini thanked him in the name of Italy, in Spain Espronceda drew his inspiration from him, and Castelar, in the later time, eulogized him for his liberating influences in the peninsula with Spanish amplitude of phrase. Karl Elze thinks that the Russian poet,

Pushkin, was his child; if it were so, Byron might well be proud of what such an influence was the beginning of in Russia. This rapid survey, with its brilliant names, impresses the mind with the range and dominance of this man, although Landor's sneer, when he hoped that "the mercies which have begun with man's forgetfulness may be crowned with God's forgiveness," does not now seem so absurd as formerly.

To look at the matter from this point of view, however, is to confuse Byron with Byronism. There was a European mood, a temperament of the revolutionary time, that fed on Byron, but he was not its creator, and to regard him as more than a single influence of many that moulded the young men of the next generation is to give him vastly more than his due. This is the secret of his vogue in Europe, not that he liberated their minds, but that he set the fashion for minds expanding in a new age of intellectual pride and moral irresponsibility, helped to form their attitude, and was a rallying name for the faction. He was licentious, but he was neither democratical nor atheistical; he had no body of opinions properly thought out and correlated with so-

cial facts, either in politics or religion; he had no strong convictions even; but, with prejudices of rank and reminiscences of Scottish theology from which he could not free himself, he was an impulsive and therefore uneven revolter from the old régime, and never quite at home in the new camp. He preferred, he said, to be beheaded by the King and not by the mob; and the whole aristocrat spoke in the saying. Shelley wrote of him, "The canker of aristocracy needs to be cut out;" and he hits off Byron's inconsequence in religion where he speaks of him under the name of Maddalo, and contrasts him with himself. Maddalo, he says, took a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion; but, he adds, "What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known." Byron is believed to have talked with Shelley more seriously than with any other man. He did not himself know what he thought; and his state of mind was well expressed by his remark to Lady Byron, "The trouble is, I *do* believe." In substance, therefore, unlike Shelley, who was democratical and atheistical on principle, Byron was far from being the ideal of the various "young" nationalities,

France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, in the principal tenets dear to the age. It was rather his personality, and what they transformed him into by their worship, that had power over them in their search for "liberty;" and truly, though his ideas were incomplete and fragmentary, and inextricably blended, even in their formation, with his impulses and the accidents of his position as a pariah of genius, yet there was a contagion in his spirit, a dash of energy and of abandon, that told as blood tells more than thought.

One advantage, too, Byron had with foreign nations that with his own counts as a defect. He had no form, no art, no finish; and the poet who failed in these things can be read in our day only by a kind of sufferance, and with continual friction with what has come to be our mastering literary taste for perfection in the manner. It has been said that he consequently bore translation better than he otherwise would. His quality is power, not charm; the mood and the situation and the thought are the elements that count in his poetry, while the words are at the best eloquent or witty, but not "the living garment of light." The result was, that

he could be given almost completely in a foreign language. This consideration may go far to explain the relative estimate of him by foreign writers in comparison with other English poets; for these others who have the charm that cannot be transfused, the art that will obey no master but its own Prospero, are seen, as one may say, without their singing robes; and their poetry, made prose, loses half its excellence. This, together with the German element in one portion of his work and the strong Italian influence in a larger portion, especially in Don Juan, must be taken into account in any attempt to understand why he was the best known English poet on the Continent, and perhaps, with the exception of Shakespeare, still is.

In England, Byron's reputation met with rapid decline from natural causes. It is not likely that his misconduct in morals was much against him, and Beaconsfield was wholly on the wrong track when he reminded the Byron meeting that, after half a century, a man's private life scarcely enters into the estimate of his literary genius. It seems rather Byron's lack of orthodoxy that England most resented. Society put up with much libertinism in those days in high quar-

ters; but Byron had attacked the faith, or at least elements of it, which the Church shared in common with Calvinism, and this was too shocking a matter for a society which found hardly more than matter for gossip in natural sons and daughters. This was the reason which a bishop alleged in the House of Lords in answer to Brougham, in the debate on the second refusal of the Abbey. Byron had attacked Christianity, and he should not be interred "in the Temple of our God." The middle classes have always rejected Byron, in like manner, because he scoffed, though, no doubt, his life and the licentious portions of his poetry also offended them. From the first his skepticism was heavily against him, and probably it still remains the strongest objection to his works in the minds of Englishmen generally. In Landor's bitter attack (he had offended Landor by rhyming his name with *gander*) this charge is made the climax, and the passage is brief enough to quote as the best word of Byron's enemies: —

"Afterwards, whenever he wrote a bad poem, he supported his sinking fame by some signal act of profligacy: an elegy by a seduction, a heroic by an adultery, a trag-

edy by a divorce. On the remark of a learned man that irregularity is no indication of genius, he began to lose ground rapidly, when, on a sudden, he cried out at the Haymarket, *There is no God.* It was then surmised more generally and more gravely that there was something in him, and he stood upon his legs almost to the last. Say what you will, once whispered a friend of mine, there are things in him strong as poison and original as sin." This, with all its excess, is no inapt character of Byron, as English prejudice drew him.

On the other hand, much that was in his favor at first was necessarily temporary. The man had a story. He was one of the picturesque characters of the age, and while he lived he was interesting to his time merely for his personal fortunes. It was to his gain, too, that he identified his own romance with that which he early invented, appealing to the adventurous in men and to the pity and admiration of women. His heroes are strong, and strength succeeds with the sex in fiction as well as in life; and they are, besides, usually faithful in love, while their crimes are taken out of the moral region of deliberate choice by a kind of emo-

tional sophistry, and somehow are charged to their circumstances, so that the unwary and innocent reader commiserates their villainies instead of being revolted by them. These tales (and no part of his work was more popular) are hard to read to-day, but we forget too readily what raw and bloody fiction the world had in the first score years of this century; we cannot conceive how London ran after stories of blighted brigands and sentimental corsairs, in the very thunder of Waterloo. But so it was, and Byron was more interesting in that he was the unhappy and noble original from which the pirates of his imagination were drawn. If he changed the scene and wandered over Europe as Childe Harold, he gained in sentiment; if he wore the mask of Manfred, he gained in tragedy; and if he sneered in Don Juan, there was the jaded man of the world, perhaps more interesting. He was, moreover, a peer; but a dead peer certainly is no better than a dead lion, and when he died, why, — the fashion in collars changed. Other living personalities occupied the stage; England grew steadily more sincere in religion, more strict in the standard of private morals, more exacting of seriousness in

thought and of perfection in literary form; and all these influences were adverse to Byron, who made no offsetting gain in his own country from the revolutionary fervor that helped him on the Continent.

What is there left? Some stirring passages of adventure, some eloquent descriptions of nature, some personal lyrics of true poetic feeling, dramas which, it is to be hoped, have finally damned "the unities," and one great poem of the modern spirit, Don Juan. And what remains of that melodramatic Byron of women's fancies? His character has come out plain, and we are really amazed at it, — proud, sensual, selfish, and, it must be added, mean. Ignoble he was, in many ways, but, for all that, the energy of his passions, his vitality, his masterly egotism, and the splendid force of his genius, made him a commanding name and stamped him upon the succeeding European time. He cannot be neglected by history, but men certainly appear to pass him by. Arnold has endeavored to bring him back by a collection; but Arnold's critical views on poetry seem to be justifications in age for the tastes he had when he was young, — reasons after the act. A late biographer

thinks that the decadence of his fame is due to the conservatism of the last half-century, and that in the revolutionary age that ought soon to be beginning, he will retrieve himself. But can this be hoped of a "revolutionary" poet whom Swinburne has cast aside? The prediction does not convince us. Byronism has gone by, and the age of the "enlightenment" in Germany and France; such a mood is not repeated. Goethe outlived Wertherism, but had Byron such good fortune? In his own character there are such defects as forbid admiration in the light of our moral ideas; and in his poems, taken apart from their time, there are other defects, both in their substance, and, unquestionably, in their form, which forbid the sort of approval that would make them in a true sense classic, as a whole, though the qualities that make Childe Harold and Don Juan great, and preserve here and there passages in other poems, are those that confer immortality. He was a poet; he was a force, also, that spent itself partly in creating a world-wide affectation, and partly in rousing and reinforcing the impulse of individual liberty on the Continent; but he is a poet no one

can love, and he left a memory that no one can admire, and there is none of his works that receives the meed of perfect praise.

ON BROWNING'S DEATH.

THE death of Browning brings one stage nearer the too plainly approaching end of a literary age which will long be full of curious interest to the student of the moods of the mind of man. Time has linked his name with that of Tennyson, and the conjunction gives to England another of those double stars of genius in which her years are rich, and by which the spirit of an age has a twofold expression. The old opposition, the polarity of mind, by virtue of which the Platonist differs from the Aristotelian, the artist from the thinker, Shakespeare from Jonson, shows its efficacy here, too, in the last modern age, and divides the poets and their admirers by innate preferences. It is needful to remember this contrast, though not to insist upon it unduly, in order to approach the work of Browning rightly, to be just to those who idolize him without offense to those who are repelled by him. The analysis of his powers, the charting of his

life and work, are not difficult; but the value of his real achievement is more uncertain. Interest centres entirely in his poetry, for his career has been without notable incident, and is told when it is said that he has lived the life of a scholar and man of letters in England and Italy amid the social culture of his time. For the world, his career is the succession of books he has put forth, and this is as he would have it; publicity beyond this he did not seek, but refused with violence and acrimony.

In his earliest poem, youthful in its self-portraiture, its literary touch, and its fragmentary plan, the one striking quality is the flow of language. Here was a writer who would never lack for words; fluent, as if inexhaustible, the merely verbal element in Pauline shows no struggle with the medium of the poet's art. This gift of facility was, as is usual, first to show itself. In Paracelsus the second primary quality of Browning was equally conspicuous, — the power of reasoning in verse. These two traits have for a poet as much weakness as strength, and they lie at the source of Browning's defects as a master of poetic art. His facility allowed him to be diffuse in language, and his rea-

soning habit led him often to be diffuse in matter. In Sordello the two produced a monstrosity, both in construction and expression, not to be rivaled in literature. Picturesque detail, intellectual interest, moral meaning, struggle in vain in that tale to make themselves felt and discerned through the tangle of words and the labyrinth of act and reflection. But already in these poems Browning had shown, to himself, if not to the world, that he had come to certain conclusions, to a conception of human life and a decision as to the use of his art in regard to it, which were to give him substantial power. He defined it by his absorption in Paracelsus with the broad ideas of infinite power and infinite love, which in his last poem still maintain their place in his system as the highest solvents of experience and speculation; and in Sordello he stated the end of art, which he continued to seek, in his maxim that little else is worth study except the "history of a soul." His entire poetic work, broadly speaking, is the illustration of this short sentence. Such prepossessions with the spiritual meaning of life as these poems show made sure the predominance in his work of the higher interests of

man; and he won his audience finally by this fact, that he had something to say that was ethical and religious. The development, however, of both the theory and practice of his mind had to be realized in far more definite and striking forms than the earlier poems before the attention of the world could be secured.

It would seem natural that a man with such convictions as Browning acknowledged, should be preëminently an idealist, and that his point of weakness should prove to be the tendency to metaphysical and vague matter not easily putting on poetical form. But he was, in fact, a realist, — one who is primarily concerned with things, and uses the method of observation. His sense for actual fact is always keen. In that poem of Paracelsus, which is a discussion in the air if ever a poem was, it is significant to find him emphasizing the circumstance that he had taken very few liberties with his subject, and bringing books to show evidence of historical fidelity. But, little of the dramatic spirit as there is in Paracelsus, there was much in Browning when it should come to be released, and it belongs to the dramatist to be interested in the facts of life, the flesh

and blood reality, in which he may or may not (according to his greatness) find a soul. Browning was thus a realist, and he chose habitually the objective method of art — but to set forth "the history of a soul." Had he been an idealist, his subject would have been "the history of *the* soul;" his method might or might not have been different. This change of the particle is a slight one, but it involves that polarity of mind which sets Browning opposite to Tennyson. He deals with individuals, takes in imagination their point of view, assumes for the time being their circumstances and emotions; and one who does this in our time, with a preoccupation with the soul in the individual, cannot escape from one overpowering impression, repeated from every side of the modern age, — the impression, namely, of the relativity of human life.

This is the lesson which is spread over Browning's pages, with line on line and precept on precept. By it he comes into harmony with the very spirit of the century on its intellectual side, and represents it. The "history of a soul" differs very greatly according to circumstance, native impulses, the needs of life at different stages of growth,

the balance of faculties and desires in it, the temperament of its historical period, the access to it of art or music or thought, and in a thousand ways; and Browning devotes himself oftentimes to the exposition of all this web of circumstance, in order that we may see the soul as it was under its conditions, instead of leaping to a conclusion by a hard-and-fast morality based upon the similarity of the soul in all men. The task happily falls in with his fine gift of reasoning, and increases by practice the suppleness and subtlety of this faculty of his. One might say, indeed, without close computation, that the larger part of his entire poetic work is occupied with such reasoning upon psychological cases, in the manner of a lawyer who educes a client's justification from the details of his temptation. Many of the longer poems are only instances of special pleading, and have all the faults that belong to that form of thought. The Ring and the Book is such an interminable argument, marvelous for intellectual resource, for skill in dialectic, for plausibility. Bishop Blougram, Mr. Sludge, Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, and others, readily occur to mind as being in the same way "apologies;" and in these

one feels that, while it is well to know what the prisoner urges on his own behalf, it is the shabby, the cowardly, the criminal, the base, the detestable, that is masking under a too well-woven cloak of words, and that the special pleader is pursuing his game at the risk of a higher honesty than consists in the mere understanding of the mechanism of motive and act. Yet this catholicity, which seems to have for its motto, "Who understands all, forgives all," is a natural consequence in a mind so impressed with the doctrine of the relativity of human life as was Browning's. The tendency of the doctrine is to efface moral judgment, and to substitute for it intellectual comprehension; and usually this results in a practical fatalism, acquiesced in if not actively held. Here, too, Browning's mental temperament has another point of contact with the general spirit of the age, and allows him to take up into his genius the humanitarian instinct so powerful in his contemporaries. For the perception of the excuses for men's action in those of low or morbid or deformed development liberalizes the mind, and the finding of the spark of soul in such individuals does mean to the Christian the find-

ing of that immortal part which equalizes all in an equal destiny, however the difference may look between men while the process of life is going on. Browning came very early to this conviction, that in all men, however weak or grossly set this spark may be, it is to be sought for. In this he is consistently philanthropic and democratic, Christian in spirit and practice, comprehensive in tolerance, large in charity, intellectually (but not emotionally) sympathetic. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that his love of righteousness is not so striking a trait.

But what in all this view of life is most original in Browning is something that possibly perplexes even his devoted admirers. Life, he says, no matter what it may be in its accidents of time, or place, or action, is the stuff to make the soul of. In the humblest as the noblest, in Caliban as in Prospero, the life vouchsafed is the means (adequate, he seems to say, in all cases) of which the soul makes use to grow in. He thus avoids the deadening conclusions to which his doctrine of relativity might lead, by asserting the equal and identical opportunity in all to develop the soul. He unites with

this the original theory — at least one that he has made his own — that whatever the soul seeks it should seek with all its might; and, pushing to the extreme, he urges that if a man sin, let him sin to the uttermost of his desire. This is the moral of the typical poem of this class, The Statue and the Bust, and he means more by this than that the intention, sinning in thought, is equivalent to sinning in act, — he means that a man should have his will. No doubt this is directly in accord with the great value he places on strength of character, vitality in life, on resolution, courage, and the braving of consequences. But the ignoring of the immense value of restraint as an element in character is complete; and in the case of many whose choice is slowly and doubtfully made in those younger years when the desire for life in its fullness of experience is strongest, and the wisdom of knowledge of life in its effects is weakest, the advice to obey impulse at all costs, to throw doubt and authority to the winds, and "live my life and have my day," is of dubious utility. Over and over again in Browning's poetry one meets with this insistence on the value of moments of high excitement, of intense liv-

ing, of full experience of pleasure, even though such moments be of the essence of evil and fruitful in all dark consequences. It is probable that a deep optimism underlies all this; that Browning believed that the soul does not perish in its wrong-doing, but that through this experience, too, as through good, it develops finally its immortal nature, and that, as in his view the life of the soul is in its energy of action, the man must act even evil if he is to grow at all. Optimism, certainly, of the most thorough-going kind this is; but Browning is so consistent an optimist in other parts of his philosophy that this defense may be made for him on a point where the common thought and deepest conviction of the race, in its noblest thinkers and purest artists, are opposed to him, refusing to believe that the doing of evil is to be urged in the interest of true manliness.

The discussion of Browning's attitude towards life in the actual world of men has led away from the direct consideration of the work in which he embodied his convictions. The important portion of it came in middle life, when he obtained mastery of the form of poetic art known as the dramatic

monologue. A realist, if he be a poet, must resort to the drama. It was inevitable in Browning's case. Yet the drama, as a form, offered as much unfitness for Browning's genius as it did fitness. The drama requires energy, it is true, and interest in men as individuals; and these Browning had. It also requires concentration, economy of material, and constructive power; and these were difficult to Browning. He did not succeed in his attempts to write drama in its perfect form. He could make fragments of intense power in passion; he could reveal a single character at one critical moment of its career; he could sum up a life history in a long soliloquy; but he could not do more than this and keep the same level of performance. Why he failed is a curious question, and will doubtless be critically debated with a plentiful lack of results. His growth in dramatic faculty, in apprehension of the salient points of character and grasp in presenting them, in perception of the value of situation and power to use it to the full, can readily be traced; but there comes a point where the growth stops. Superior as his mature work is to that of his youth in all these qualities, it falls short of that perfect

and complex design and that informing life which mark the developed dramatist. In the monologues he deals with incidents in a life, with moods of a personality, with the consciousness which a man has of his own character at the end of his career; but he seizes these singly, and at one moment. His characters do not develop before the eye; he does not catch the soul in the very act; he does not present life so much as the results of life. He frequently works by the method of retrospect, he tells the story, but does not enact it. In all these he displays the governing motive of his art, which is to reveal the soul; but if the soul reveals itself in his verses, it is commonly by confession, not presentation. He has, in fact, that malady of thought which interferes with the dramatist's control of his hand; he is thinking *about* his characters, and only indirectly *in* them, and he is most anxious to convey his reflections upon the psychical phenomenon which he is attending to. In other words, he is, primarily, a moralist; he reasons, and he is fluent in words and fertile in thoughts, and so he loses the object itself, becomes indirect, full of afterthought and parenthesis, and impairs the dramatic effect.

These traits may be observed, in different degrees, in many of the poems, even in the best. In the dramas themselves the lack of constructive power is absolute. Pippa Passes is only a succession of dramatic fragments artificially bound together, and in the others the lack of body and interdependent life between the parts is patent to all. In a Balcony, certainly one of his finest wrought poems, is only an incident. He is at his best when his field is most narrow — in such a poem as The Laboratory.

There is a compensation for these deficiencies of power in that the preference of his mind for a single passion or mood or crisis at its main moment opens to him the plain and unobstructed way to lyrical expression. His dramatic feeling of the passion and the situation supplies an intensity which finds its natural course in lyrical exaltation. It may well be thought, if it were deemed necessary to decide upon the best in Browning's work, that his genius is most nobly manifest in those lyrics and romances which he called dramatic. The scale rises from his argumentative and moralizing verse, however employed, through those monologues which obey the necessity for greater concen-

tration as the dramatic element enters into them, up to those most powerful and direct poems in which the intensity of feeling enforces a lyrical movement and lift; and akin to these last are the songs of love or heroism into which the dramatic element does not enter. Indeed, Browning's lyrical gift was more perfect than his dramatic gift; he knew the secret of a music which has witchery in it independent of what the words may say, and when his hand fell on that chord, he mastered the heart with real poetic charm. It was seldom, however, that this happy moment came to him, ennobling his language and giving wing to his emotion; and, such poems being rare, it remains true that the best of his work is to be sought in those pieces, comprehending more of life, where his dramatic power takes on a lyrical measure. Such work became more infrequent as years went on, and he declined again into that earlier style of wordy ratiocination, of tedious pleading as of a lawsuit, of mere intellectuality as of the old hair-splitting schoolmen, though he retained the strength and definiteness of mind which mere growth had brought to him, and he occasionally produced a poem which was only less

good than the best of his middle age. The translations from the Greek with which he employed his age stand in a different class from his original poems, and were a fortunate resort for his vigorous but now feebly creative mind. At the end he still applied himself to the interpretation of individual lives, but in choosing them he was attracted even more uniformly by something exceptional, often grotesque, in them, and hence they are more curious and less instructive than the earlier work of the same kind.

The mass of Browning's writings which has been glanced at as the expression of the reasoning, the dramatic, or the lyrical impulse in his genius has attracted attention as wide as the English language, and it has been intimated that this success has been won in some degree on other than poetic grounds. It is fair to say, in view of the facts, that many who have felt his appeal to them have found a teacher rather than a poet. Two points in which he reflects his age have been mentioned, but there is a third point which has perhaps been more efficacious than his sense of the relativity of human life or his conviction of the worth of every human soul: he adds to these cardinal

doctrines a firm and loudly asseverated religious belief. It is the more noteworthy because his reasoning faculty might in his time have led him almost anywhere rather than to the supreme validity of truth arrived at by intuition. This makes his character the more interesting, for the rationalizing mind which submits itself to intuitive faith exactly parallels in Browning the realist with a predominating interest in the soul. There is no true contradiction in this, no inconsistency; but the combination is unusual. It is natural that, in a time of decreasing authority in formal religion, a poet in Browning's position should wield an immense attraction, and owe something, as Carlyle did, to the wish of his audience to be reassured in their religious faith. Browning had begun with that resolution of the universe into infinite power and infinite love of which something has already been said, and he continued to teach that through nature we arrive at the conception of omnipotence, and through the soul at the conception of love, and he apparently finds the act of faith in the belief that infinite power will finally be discerned as the instrument and expression of infinite love. This is pure optimism; and

in accordance with it he preaches his gospel, which is that each soul should grow to its utmost in power and in love, and in the face of difficulties — of mysteries in experience or thought — should repose with entire trust on the doctrine that God has ordered life beneficently, and that we who live should wait with patience, even in the wreck of our own or others' lives, for the disclosure hereafter which shall reconcile to our eyes and hearts the jar with justice and goodness of all that has gone before. This is a system simple enough and complete enough to live by, if it be truly accepted. It is probable, however, that Browning wins less by these doctrines, which are old and commonplace, than by the vigor with which he dogmatizes upon them; the certainty with which he speaks of such high matters; the fervor, and sometimes the eloquence, with which, touching on the deepest and most secret chords of the heart's desire, he strikes out the notes of courage, of hope and vision, and of the foretasted triumph. The energy of his own faith carries others along with it; the manliness of his own soul infects others with its cheer and its delight in the struggle of spiritual life on earth; and all this the more because

he is learned in the wisdom of the Rabbis, is conversant with modern life and knowledge in all its range, is gifted with intellectual genius, and yet displays a faith the more robust because it is not cloistered, the more credible because it is not professional.

The character of Browning's genius, his individual traits, the general substance of his thought, do not admit of material misconception. It is when the question is raised upon the permanent value of his work that the opportunity for wide divergence arises. That there are dreary wastes in it cannot be gainsaid. Much is now unreadable that was excused in a contemporary book; much never was readable at all; and of the remainder how much will the next age in its turn cast aside? Its serious claim to our attention on ethical, religious, or intellectual grounds may be admitted, without pledging the twentieth century, which will have its own special phases of thought, and thinkers to illustrate them. Browning must live, as the other immortals do, by the poetry in him. It is true he has enlarged the field of poetry by annexing the experience that belongs to the artist and the musician, and has made some of his finest and most original

poems out of such motives; and his wide knowledge has served him in other ways, though it has stiffened many a page with pedantry and antiquarianism. It is true that there is a grotesque quality in some of his work, but his humor in this kind is really a pretense; no one laughs at it; it arouses only an amazed wonder, like the stone masks of some mediæval church. In all that he derived from learning and scholarship there is the alloy of mortality; in all his moralizing and special pleading and superfine reasoning there enters the chance that the world may lose interest in his treatment of the subject; in all, except where he sings from the heart itself or pictures life directly and without comment save of the briefest, there is some opportunity for time to breed decay. The faith he preached was the poetical complement of Carlyle's prose, and proceeded from much the same grounds and by the same steps: believe in God, and act like a man — that was the substance of it. But Carlyle himself already grows old and harsh. The class of mind to which Browning belongs depends on its matter for its life; unless he has transformed it into poetry, time will deal hardly with it.

To come to the question which cannot be honestly set aside, although it is no longer profitable to discuss it, Browning has not cared for that poetic form which bestows perennial charm, or else he was incapable of it. He fails in beauty, in concentration of interest, in economy of language, in selection of the best from the common treasure of experience. In those works where he has been most indifferent, as in the Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, he has been merely whimsical and dull; in those works where the genius he possessed is most felt, as in Saul, A Toccata of Galuppi's, Rabbi Ben Ezra, The Flight of the Duchess, The Bishop Orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church, Hervé Riel, Cavalier Tunes, Time's Revenges, and many more, he achieves beauty or nobility or fitness of phrase such as only a poet is capable of. It is in these last pieces and their like that his fame lies for the future. It was his lot to be strong as the thinker, the moralist with "the accomplishment of verse," the scholar interested to rebuild the past of experience, the teacher with an explicit dogma to enforce in an intellectual form with examples from life, the anatomist of human passions, in-

stincts, and impulses in all their gamut, the commentator on his own age; he was weak as the artist, and indulged, often unnecessarily and by choice, in the repulsive form — in the awkward, the obscure, the ugly. He belongs with Jonson, with Dryden, with the heirs of the masculine intellect, the men of power not unvisited by grace, but in whom mind is predominant. Upon the work of such poets time hesitates, conscious of their mental greatness, but also of their imperfect art, their heterogeneous matter; at last the good is sifted from that whence worth has departed.

SHELLEY'S WORK.

The centenary of Shelley's birth will be duly observed with public ceremonies in England and Italy — the land that bore him and drove him forth, and the land that sheltered him and now guards his grave, both equally his home in the eyes of the world; but in the private thoughts of many single lives the day of his birth will be silently remembered with tenderness, with gratitude, and with a renewal of faith in the things in which he believed. Personal devotion must naturally enter into these feelings, for such days are to commemorate a life, and they bring the man back with peculiar power. To win unknown friends, age after age, is a privilege of the poet; it is his reward — the greater because it can touch him no more — for the open trust in mankind with which he confides, to whosoever will, the secret things of his spirit. Yet, to make a poet's personality the main element in his memory, if he be really great, confines his fame too narrowly. At-

tractive as Shelley was, his worth did not lie wholly in his charm. Interest in his life may become degraded into ignoble curiosity, and, in time's balance, love's gift is less weighty than reason's award.

Recognition of noble human traits is an important part of justice done to the dead; but it is not thus that Shelley would wish to be judged. Chaucer's question, "How shall the world be served?" was the alpha and omega of his life. It inspired his youthful prose; as his faculties grew and the poet emerged from the thinker, it governed the most intense expression of his soul in manhood; it absorbed him, as he himself said, with that passion for reforming the world which was elemental in his genius. It is true that the artistic and the practical instincts in him worked together imperfectly, and that at times of despair he fell back upon himself, pure poet, pouring his heart out in lyrical effusion, with cadences of pain that fill our eyes with tears. But he took heart again, and returned, though always more wearied, to the large interests of the race. He believed that man is the poet's muse; at the height of his aspiration, singing with the

skylark, he still remembered that the poet's "unbidden hymns" are the means by which the world shall be wrought to sympathies with unheeded hopes and fears; in the depth of his dejection he still prayed that the wind might blow abroad the poet's words, "as from an unextinguished hearth ashes and sparks," to be an enkindling prophecy throughout the world — "my words among mankind." What he believed true poets are he told in a familiar passage of his prose — "the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets that sing to battle and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves."

One hundred years have passed since he was born, and two generations have been buried since his ashes were laid by the Roman wall. It is reasonable to ask whether he had any share in this prophetic power, brooding on things to come, which is the mystical endowment of poetic genius; whether he anticipated time in those far thoughts forecasting hope, which

he declared to be the substance of poetic intuition; whether he be one of those who, in his own phrase, rule our spirits from their urns, with power still vital in the chaotic thought and striving of mankind. "Poets," he said, concluding the impassioned words just quoted, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." If the phrase seems the mere enthusiasm of eloquence, yet so opposite a mind as Johnson's ratifies it. "He," said the old doctor concerning the poet, "must write as the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations." To leave, then, Shelley's charm, his character, and all his private life, which the world well knows; to leave analysis and criticism, since any occasion will serve for such examination of the propriety of his moral method in poetry, and its beneficial or injurious effects upon his work, of the truth of his imagination and of its nearness or remoteness in human interest and reality, of his art, the speed and exaltation of his luminous eloquence, the piercing tone of his lyrical song — to leave such matters, I say, of merely personal or

literary concern, what has the century past disclosed in regard to Shelley's sympathies with the next ages, and the vitality of his energy in the forces that advance mankind? The influences that blend in progress are many and various; the foreknowledge of the most clear-sighted is vague and doubtful, and the wisest contributes only his portion to the great result. But, this being allowed, in what sense and how far was Shelley prophetic of the time to come, and an element in its coming?

The spirit of discontent has been a presiding genius in literature since the reflective life of man began. The imaginative creation of ideal commonwealths marks its conquest of political thought, and the dream of the golden age its victory in poetry. So long is it since the inspiration that governed Shelley has been active in minds like his own. The Republic of Plato, however, and that eclogue of the young Vergil which won for him a place among the prophets of Christ, though they are the highest reach of literature in such expression, are negative; they condemn

what is, by a poetic escape into a world that should be. With the rise of democracy the positive expression of discontent, in those parts of literature which reflect the life of society as distinguished from individual life, has become more direct, comprehensive, and telling. In the last century, in particular, the world was coming to a consciousness of its own misery. The state of man was never more bitterly set forth than by Swift, nor more drearily than by Johnson. Comfortable and self-satisfied as that century is often described, it was the dark soil in which the seeds of time were germinating. It ended in dry skepticism, cold rationalism, and finally in that utilitarian preoccupation of the mind which was a European mood.

The first effort toward better things, as is apt to be the case, was political. The Revolution broke. The hopefulness of that time, when in the year of Shelley's birth Wordsworth said, "'Twas bliss to be alive, but to be young was very heaven," is perhaps that one of its phases which is now realized with most difficulty. It reminds one of the faith of the early Church in the immediate coming of the

reign of Christ on earth. When Shelley began to think and feel, and became a living soul, the first flush of dawn had gone by; but the same hopefulness sprang up in him, it was invincible, and it made him the poet of the Revolution, of which he was the child. So far as the Revolution was speculative or moral, he reflected it completely. Its commonplaces were burning truths in his heart; its ferment was his own intellectual life; its confusions, its simplicities, its misapprehensions of the laws of social change, were a part of himself. It would be wrong to ascribe the crudities of Shelley's thought merely to his immature and boyish development: they belonged quite as much to the youth of the cause; he received what he was taught in the form in which his masters held it. The ease with which genius thrives upon any food, and turns all to use, might be astonishing were it not so commonly to be observed; but its transformations are sometimes bewildering. Like fire from heaven Shelley's genius fell upon the dry bones of rationalism, and they rose up, a spirit of beauty and of power. It was the same change

that took place when philosophy went out into the streets of Paris, and in the twinkling of an eye was made a flaming mænad. It was the wand of the Revolution touching the soul of man. Shelley was, in truth, in the whirl of forces which he only half understood, vaster than he knew, with destinies dimly adumbrated in his own spirit, like the poet of his own eloquent description. The Revolution was, in Gray's phrase, "the Mighty Mother" of this child; she showed him the world-old vision of the Saturnian reign that has ever hung over Italy, yet more fair than the fairest of all our lands; she set him in the footprints of Plato; and she filled his heart with many hatreds.

The principles and remedies which Shelley adopted were of the utmost simplicity. Principles and remedies must be simple in order to be capable of wide application in the reform of society. He was not an original thinker. He had the enormous receptive and assimilative power which characterizes high genius, and he made it his function to give lofty and winning expression to the ideas that he felt to be of ennobling and beneficent power over men.

He had also a strongly practical temperament; and he wished to apply ideas as well as to express them, and in his own life he was always restlessly doing what he thought, linking the word with an act, carrying conviction to the extreme issue of duty performed. It was this union of the practical and speculative instincts, each highly developed, which, under the breath of his poetic nature, made his sympathies with reform so intense that he might well describe them as a passion. Yet his political, social, and religious beliefs were nothing unusual. They have been called superficial; but they were so, in the main, in no other sense than are the principles of democracy, philanthropy, and intellectual liberty. They were the simple truths whose acceptance by the world goes on so slowly. He adopted the right of private judgment, and with it the right of the individual to put his beliefs in action; the first discredited for him the excellence of the existing order, and brought him quickly into conflict with prevailing opinion; the second, in its turn, occasioned a more serious collision with that existing order itself, which met

him in the form of custom, intolerance, and force. These three things he hated, because he hated most of all injustice, of which they were the triple heads. In all this he had the ordinary fortune of the revolutionist. He was face to face with the enemy. The power of custom in society, which Wordsworth had described, "heavy as frost and deep almost as life"; the venom of intolerance, the foe against which Locke had armed him; the supremacy of force, if it be invoked, in which the long history of tyranny had instructed him — these stood in his way, and only his own indignant verse can express the violence of the hatred and contempt they excited in his breast.

What were the tenets that had so involved him in opposition to the social opinion of his own country that he went into voluntary exile? His atheism stands first because it caused his expulsion from Oxford. What was this atheism in substance? He had conceived the divine power in terms of the historic Jehovah, and its relation to man under the Christian dispensation in terms of the legal definitions of an obsolescent theology; nor

can it be gainsaid that these notions coincided with the ideas then prevalent, but not realized with the same distinctness in the moral consciousness of those who held them as in Shelley's. When he began to think, this conception was antagonized in two ways. In the first instance he acquired some rudimentary metaphysics, and it became necessary to reconcile an anthropomorphic conception of deity with a philosophical definition. In the second instance he developed an ideal of goodness, and it became necessary to reconcile the divine virtue, as shown in the same historic conception of deity, with the voice of his own conscience. He took the short and easy, but natural method, and denied the truth of the original conception. The metaphysical difficulty, however little it may vex mature minds, was a real one to him; and in connection with it Newman's statement may profitably be recalled, that no question is hedged about with more difficulties than the being of God. The moral difficulty, also, was a real one; and Robertson, whose Christian faith and sincerity none can doubt, was right in defending Shelley's decision and saying, "Change

the *name*, and I will bid that *character* defiance with you." This was Shelley's atheism — on the one hand, a philosophical definition, and on the other, the humanizing of a pre-Christian and mediæval idea of God in accordance with that moral enlightenment which Christianity itself has spread through the world. Shelley expressed his denial in terms of blasphemy, as the words were then understood; but the "almighty fiend" whom he denounced was as much an idol as Dagon or Moloch.

What has the issue been? The conception which Shelley attacked with such vehemence no longer finds a voice in public discussion. It is as dumb as the ideas which once suggested such picturesquely lurid titles to the sermons under which our fathers trembled and transgressed. To-day the philosophical definition would be less difficult to frame, and it would awake no serious hostility; the moral ideal, too, is enthroned in religious conceptions as securely as in the conscience of man. It would be idle to say that advance has not been made, or to deny that it has pursued the lines of Shelley's instincts, his intellectual questioning, and his moral sympa-

thies. Merely as a polemical writer he stood in the necessary path of progress; but as a poet, he vastly strengthened that moral enthusiasm which after his death regenerated religion as it had before inspired politics. He impressed his own moral ideal on those whom he influenced, and the old conception became as impossible for them as for him. Other forces united in the general tendency, for all things spiritual drew that way; nor is it possible to distinguish his share in the change that has passed over English theology in this country. But some sentences of the Rev. Stopford Brooke are apposite, and the opinion of such an observer may be allowed weight upon the question of Shelley's place in this field. "He indirectly made," says this writer, "as time went on, an ever-increasing number of men feel that the will of God could not be in antagonism to the universal ideas concerning man, that His character could not be in contradiction to the moralities of the heart, and that the destiny He willed for mankind must be as universal and as just and loving as Himself. There are more clergymen and more religious laymen than

we imagine who trace to the emotion Shelley awakened in them when they were young their wider and better views of God." Whether this be true to the extent indicated is immaterial. It is enough if it becomes clear that Shelley's "atheism" was, by its revolt, the sign and promise of that liberalized thought and more humane feeling in respect to the divine dealing with men which characterized the religious progress of the time; that his denial has been sustained by the common conscience of mankind; and that the affirmations of the moral ideal which he made have been strengthened by years as they passed by, and have spread and been accepted as noble expressions of the conviction and aspiration of the men who came after him. Whether Shelley intended these results in the precise form that they took is also immaterial. It probably never entered his mind that clergymen would thank him for a liberalized orthodoxy, any more than that Owenites would use Queen Mab as an instrument in their propaganda, and thus give the widest circulation to that one of his poems which he would have suppressed. Certainly he had a conscious purpose to

destroy old religious conceptions and to quicken the hearts of men with new ideals, not religious, but moral. If both results came about, under the favor of time, and were such as the poet meant them to be, as in some measure was the case, and yet the influence also operated in an unexpected way by the reaction of the awakened conscience on the narrower faith to its liberalization instead of its destruction, this does not affect the reality of Shelley's work; it affords rather an example of that element in the poet through which, as Shelley said, he is an instrument as well as a power, and in neither capacity is wholly conscious of his significance.

The second tenet which immediately drew upon him scandal and obloquy was his belief that legal marriage was not a proper social institution. He had derived the opinion from his teachers, and held it in common with other reformers of the age. It is a view that from time to time arises in minds of an entirely pure and virtuous disposition under the stress of a rigorous and undiscriminating law. The state of women under English law was then one of practical servitude, and in the case of

unfit marriages might become, and sometimes was, deplorable. The continuance of forced union, on the side of either man or woman, after affection or respect ceased, was revolting to Shelley, the more so in proportion to the refinement and purity of his own poetic idealization of the relation of love. The helpless condition of woman under such circumstances appealed to him as a violation of justice and of liberty as well as a degradation of love. If since his time the rights of married women have been recognized by important and really sweeping changes in their legal status, and if the bonds of the legal tie have been relaxed, in both instances it was an acknowledgment of the reality of the social wrongs which were the basis of his conviction. If there is less tendency among reformers to attack the institution of marriage, and the subject has ceased to be conspicuous, though still occasionally manifest, it is because the removal of the more oppressive and tyrannic elements in the difficulty has relieved the situation. The belief of Shelley in love without marriage was an extreme way of stating his disbelief in marriage without love, as the law of Eng-

land then was. There was, too, a positive as well as a negative side to his conviction, but in this he merely repeated the dream of the golden age, and asserted that in the ideal commonwealth love and marriage would be one; and this has been the common theme of Utopians, whether poets or thinkers, in all ages. In other words, it may reasonably be held that, in this case as in that of his atheism, an extreme view was taken; but in relation to the time and to the reforms made since then, his ideas of marriage held in them the substantial injustice of a state of facts then existing and the lines of tendency along which advance was subsequently made. He reflected the age, and he foreshadowed the future; though the results, just as in the case of religion, consist in a modification, and not in demolition, of the ideas which he antagonized.

Shelley's atheism, however, and his views of legal marriage, have had a disproportionate attention directed to them because of their close relation to the events of his own life. These were not the things in his philosophy for which he most cared. In the matter of marriage, though he acted

on his belief in taking his second wife without a divorce from his first, in both unions he went through the form of marriage. He would never have so compromised with the world in an opinion which was a point of conscience with him. If it had been a question of the freedom of the press, or of the welfare of the masses, he would have stood by his conviction though they sent him to prison or the scaffold. The affairs which he took an active interest in, and endeavored to make practical, were political. At first the freedom of the press was nearest to him, and he helped with sympathy or money those whom he knew to be singled out for persecution by the Government; then the state of Ireland, Catholic emancipation, the putting of reform to the vote, the condition of the poor, exercised his mind and called out such labors as were open to him; at a still later time the Manchester riots, the revolutions on the Continent, and such larger matters engaged his enthusiasm. He was the most contemporary of all poets. His keen interest in what was going on was characteristic; he lost no occasion which gave him opportunity to use the question of the

moment to spread his general principles. His immediate response to the hour is noticeable from the time, for example, of the death of the Princess Charlotte, on which he wrote a pamphlet, to that of the Greek rising, on which he composed a lyric drama. What poet before ever had occasion, as he did in the preface to Hellas, to beg "the forgiveness of my readers for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced"? The words are most significant of the spirit of his life. It is also not useless to observe that a share of Shelley's violence, especially in early years, is due to the fact that he was actually in the arena and taking blows in his own person. Such a man does not, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, write with the same equable restraint as a student in his library; he is not likely to hold opinions in temperate forms; and if, like Shelley, he is by nature sensitive to injury and resentful of it, his language takes heat and may become extravagant. What he struggled with was not only thought, but fact. It was to his advantage, doubtless, that he removed to Italy, where, being less irritated, he was

able to express his abstract ideas in the quiet and undisturbed atmosphere of imaginative poetry.

These abstract ideas, his scheme of society, were acquired in his youth, and they were, as has been said, of the utmost simplicity. He adopted the doctrine known as that of the perfectibility of man. It is especially associated with the name of Condorcet. Shelley believed that society could be made over in such a way that virtue would prevail and happiness be secured. He thought that institutions should be abolished and a new rule of life substituted. He did not enter upon details. The present was wrong; let it cease: that was the whole of the matter. It was a form of what is now called nihilism. The state of society that existed seemed to him real anarchy. "Anarchs" was a favorite word with him for kings and all persons in power. His hatred was consequently centred on the established order. It was a government of force, and therefore he hated force; kings and priests were its depositaries, he hated them; war was its method, he hated war. The word is not too strong. Gall flows

from his pen when he mentions any of these things. Their very names are to him embodied curses. If the system he saw prevailing in Europe bred in him such hatred, its results in practice filled him with pity. He was susceptible to the sight of suffering and misery, and almost from boyhood the effort to relieve wretchedness by personal action characterized him. He could endure the sight of pain as little as the sight of wrong. The lot of the poor, wherever he came upon it in experience or in description, stirred his commiseration to the depth of his heart. He was one of those born to bear the sufferings of the world, in a real and not a sentimental or metaphorical sense. He had seen the marks of the devastation of war in France; he knew the state of the people under tyrannical rule; he was as well aware of the degradation of the English masses as of the stagnation of Italy. Wherever he looked, the fruits of government were poverty, ignorance, hopelessness, in vast bodies of mankind. There was nothing for it but the Revolution, and heart and soul he was pledged to that cause.

But his hopes went far beyond the purposes of a change to be brought about by force for limited political ends; such an event involved the destruction of forms of power which he wished to see destroyed, and might result in amelioration, since force become popular was better than force that remained aristocratic; but his heart was set upon a change of a far different nature, more penetrating, more universal, more permanent — nothing less than that "divine result to which the whole creation moves." Since Shelley, in common with the thinkers of his time, believed that the world's wretchedness was due to political misrule, and could be obviated by a change of institutions, he was on his practical side in alliance with every expression of revolutionary force; but he had an ideal side, and in his poetry it was this that found expression. He sang the golden age; time and again he returned to the theme, of which he could not weary, from the hour of youth when he poured forth the story of man's perfect state in eloquence still burning with first enthusiasm, to the impassioned moment when he created the titanic forms of his highest lyrical drama,

and bade the planetary spirits discourse in spheral music the pæan of peace on earth, good will to men. The paradise of The Revolt of Islam, the isle of seclusion in Epipsychidion, the echoes of the Vergilian song in Hellas, like Queen Mab and Prometheus Unbound, show the permanence before his rapt eyes of that vision of heaven descended upon earth which has fascinated the poets of all times. Yet how transform this "world's woe" into that harmony? Shelley's command was as simple, as direct, as Christ's — "Love thy neighbor." No; there was nothing novel in it, nothing profound or original. It is so long now since man's knowledge of what is right has outrun his will to embody it in individual life and the institutions of society, that new gospels, were they possible, are quite superfluous. What Shelley had that other men seldom have was faith in this doctrine, the will to practice it, the passion to spread it. There may be to our eyes something pathetic in such simplicity, as the belief of boyhood in goodness is pathetic in the sight of the man; something innocent, as we say, in such unworldliness, and again

we intimate the eternal child in the poet's heart; but it is the simplicity and innocence — the pathos it may be — of what Christ taught. That Shelley believed what he said cannot be doubted. He thought that men might, if they would, love their fellow-men, and then injustice would of itself cease, being dried at its source, and that reign of mutual helpfulness, of the common sharing of the abundance of the earth's harvest, of man's enfranchisement from slavery to another's luxurious wants, would begin; war, poverty, and tyranny, force and fraud, greed, indulgence, and crime would be abolished. It was too obvious to need consideration; man was capable of perfection, and the method to attain to it was love, and this way once adopted, as it could be, by the fiat of each individual will, would enthrone justice and spread virtue throughout the world. It was not reason that withstood this doctrine, but custom, tradition, interested individuals and classes, the active and law-intrenched power of institutions established for the security and profit of the few — a whole order of society resting upon a principle opposite to love, the prin-

ciple of organized force. If this time-incrusted evil, this blind and deaf and dumb authority of wrong long prevalent, this sorry scheme of accepted lies, could be destroyed at a stroke, a simple resolve in each breast would bring heaven on earth.

This was Shelley's creed. It may be false, impracticable, and chimerical; it may be a doctrinaire's philosophy, an enthusiast's programme, a poet's dream: but that it has points of contact and coincidence with gospel truth is plain to see; and in fact Shelley's whole effort may be truly described as an incident in that slow spread of Christian ideas whose assimilation by mankind is so partial, uneven, imperfect, so hesitating, so full of compromise, so hopeless in delay. He had disengaged once more from the ritual of Pharisees and the things of Cæsar the original primitive commands, and made them as simple as conscience; he may have been wrong in the sense that these things are impossible to man in society; but if he was in error, he erred with a greater than Plato.

But it is not necessary to carry the

matter so far. Shelley was a moralist, but he used the poet's methods. He declared the great commands, and he denounced wrong with anathemas; but he also gave a voice to the lament of the soul, to its aspirations and its ineradicable, if mistaken, faith in the results of time; and the ideas which he uttered with such affluence of expression, such poignancy of sympathy, such a thrill of prophetic triumph, are absorbed in the spirit which poured them forth — in its indignation at injustice, its hopefulness of progress, its complete conviction of the righteousness of its cause. He has this kindling power in men's hearts. They may not believe in the perfectibility of man under the conditions of mortal life, but they do believe in his greater perfection; and Shelley's words strengthen them in effort. No cause that he had greatly at heart has retreated since his day. There are thousands now, where there were hundreds then, who hold his beliefs. The Revolution has gone on, and is still in progress, though it has yet far to go. What part he has had in the increase of the mastering ideas of the century is indeterminable.

He was dead when his apostolic work began. His earliest and unripe poem, Queen Mab, was the first to be caught up by the spirit of the times, and was scattered broadcast; and wherever it fell it served, beyond doubt, to unsettle the minds that felt it. Crude as it was, it was vehement and eloquent; and the crudities which have most offense in them are of the sort that make the entrance of such ideas into uneducated minds more easy. It was nearer intellectually to these minds than a better poem would have been. Rude thoughts not too carefully discriminated are more powerful revolutionary instruments than more exact truths in finer phrases. Queen Mab was certainly the poem by which he was long best known. The first revival of his works came just before the time of the Reform Bill, and they were an element in the agitation of men's minds; but his permanent influence began with the second revival, ten years later, when his collected works were issued by his widow. Since then edition has followed edition, and with every fall of his poems from the presses of England and America new readers feel the impulse of

his passion, blending naturally with the moral and political inspiration of an age which has exhausted its spiritual force in pursuit of the objects that he bade men seek. Democracy, of which philanthropy is the shadow, has made enormous gains; the cause is older and social analysis has gone farther than in his day; his denunciation of kings and priests seems antiquated only because the attack is now directed on the general conditions of society which make tyrannical power and legalized privilege possible under any political organization, and in industrial and commercial as well as military civilizations; his objects of detestation seem vague and unreal only because a hundred definite propositions, developed by socialistic thought, — any one of which was more rife with danger than his own elementary principles, — have been put forth without any such penalty being visited upon their authors as was fixed upon him. This advance, and more, has been made. The consciousness of the masses, both in respect to their material position and their power to remedy it, has increased indefinitely in extent and in intensity in all countries affected by Euro-

pean thought; socialism, anarchism, nihilism are names upon every lip, and they measure the active discontent of those strata of society last to be reached by thought except the *bourgeoisie*. Whatever revolutionary excess may unite with the movement, the stream flows in the direct course of Shelley's thought with an undreamt vehemence and mass. That he still implants in others that passion of his for reforming the world is not questioned; his works have been a perennial fountain of the democratic spirit with its philanthropic ardor. As in the other phases of his influence, so in this its grand phase, his work has been in modification instead of demolition of the social order; it has been only one individual element in a world-movement issuing from many causes and sustained from many sources; but here too he fulfills his own characterization of the poet, imperfectly conscious of his own meanings, dimly prophetic of what shall be, belonging to the future whose ideas come into being through his intuitions, sympathies, and longings.

Shelley's genius, then, it must be acknowledged, had this prescience by which

it seized the elements of the future yet inchoate, and glorified them, and won the hearts of men to worship them as an imagined hope, and fervently to desire their coming. If one thing were to be sought for as the secret of his power on man, I should say it was his belief in the soul. No poet ever put such unreserved trust in the human spirit. He laid upon it the most noble of all ideal tasks, and inspired it with faith in its own passion. "Save thyself," he said, and showed at the same time the death in which it lay, the life of beauty, love, and justice to which it was born as to a destiny. Virtue in her shape how lovely, humanity throughout the world how miserable, were the two visions on which he bade men look; and he refused to accept this antithesis of what is and what ought to be as inevitable in man's nature or divine providence; it remained with man, he said, to heal himself. He was helped, perhaps, in his faith in the human spirit by the early denial he made of religion as interpreted by the theology of his period; for him salvation rested with man, or nowhere. In later years he made love the principle, not only

of human society, but of the government of the universe; it was his only conception of divine power; but he never reconciled in thought this mystical belief with the apparent absence of this divine element from its lost provinces in human life. He promised men in their effort no other aid than the mere existence, in the universe, of beneficent laws of which mankind could avail itself by submitting thereto. The doctrine of the power of the human spirit to perfect itself, and the necessity of the exercise of this power as the sole means of progress, remained in unaffected integrity. This fundamental conviction is one that has spread equally with the democratic idea or the philanthropic impulse. The immediacy of the soul as the medium of even revealed truth is a conception that clarifies with each decade, and it is in harmony with Shelley's most intimate convictions, with those tendencies and dispositions of his temperament so natural to him that they were felt rather than thought. But in such analysis one may refine too much. It is meant only to illustrate how completely, in the recesses of his nature as well as in definite mani-

festation of his thought, he was the child, intellectually and morally, of the conquering influences implicit in his age, so readily apprehensive of them that he anticipated their power in the world, so intensely sympathetic that he embodied them in imagination before the fullness of time, so compelled to express them that he was their prophet and leader in the next ages.

By his own judgment, therefore, of what great poets are, he must be placed among them, and the office of genius, as he defined it, must be declared to be his. The millennium has not come, any more than it came in the first century. The cause Shelley served is still in its struggle; but those to whom social justice is a watchword, and the development of the individual everywhere in liberty, intelligence, and virtue is a cherished hope, must be thankful that Shelley lived, that the substance of his work is so vital, and his influence, inspiring as it is beyond that of any of our poets in these ways, was, and is, so completely on the side of the century's advance. His words are sung by marching thousands in the streets of London. No poet of our

time has touched the cause of progress in the living breath and heart-throb of men so close as that. Yet, remote as the poet's dream always seems, it is rather that life-long singing of the golden age, in poem after poem, which most restores and inflames those who, whether they be rude or refined, are the choicer spirits of mankind, and bring, with revolutionary violence or ideal imagination, the times to come. They hate the things he hated; like him they love, above all things, justice; they share the passion of his faith in mankind. Thus, were his own life as dark as Shakespeare's, and had he left unwritten those personal lyrics which some who conceive the poet's art less nobly would exalt above his grander poems, he would stand pre-eminent and almost solitary for his service to the struggling world, for what he did as a quickener of men's hearts by his passion for supreme and simple truths. If these have more hold in society now than when he died, and if his influence has contributed its share, however blended with the large forces of civilization, he has in this sense given law to the world and equaled the height of the loftiest concep-

tion of the poet's significance in the spiritual life of man. Such, taken in large lines and in its true relations, seems to me the work for which men should praise Shelley on this anniversary, leaving mere poetic enjoyment, however delightful, and personal charm, however winning, to other occasions.

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